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MICHU

Balzac, Vol. XVII

THE FIRST COMPLETE TRANSLATION  
INTO ENGLISH

# Honoré de Balzac

*IN TWENTY-FIVE VOLUMES*

## A Most Mysterious Case

An Episode Under the Terror  
The Seamy Side of History  
Z. Marcas

TRANSLATED BY  
E. P. ROBBINS

WITH A FRONTISPIECE IN PHOTOGRAVURE



VOLUME SEVENTEEN

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HONORÉ DE BALZAC

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*A MOST MYSTERIOUS CASE*



# A MOST MYSTERIOUS CASE

TO MONSIEUR DE MARGONE

*In memory of happy days spent at the Château  
de Saché. De Balzac.*

## I

### THE TROUBLES OF THE POLICE

**T**HE AUTUMN of the year 1803 was among the finest of the early portion of that epoch which is known to us under the appellation of "The Empire." Abundant rains had fallen in October, refreshing and rejuvenating the fields, and now, when November had half run its course, the trees were still attired in all the glory of their summer raiment. The people were beginning to believe in the existence of a compact between heaven and Bonaparte, who had recently been made Consul for life, a belief to which the great man was indebted for no small portion of his prestige, and, strange to relate, on the very day when, in 1812, the sun deserted him, his glory began to wane.

On the 15th of November of the year above mentioned, about four o'clock in the afternoon, the sun was powdering with golden dust the hoary summits of the four rows of centenarian elms that graced a long, seigniorial avenue, and illuminating with his rays the gravelled walks and verdant turf of one of those immense round-points that are still to be met with nowadays in some parts of the country, where land at one time was held so cheap that its owners could afford to set apart some portion of it for purposes of ornament. The weather was so clear, the temperature so mild,

that folk sat out beneath the trees as if it had been summer time. A man dressed in a shooting-jacket of green canvas with big green buttons and small-clothes of the same material, his feet incased in thin-soled shoes surmounted by canvas gaiters reaching to the knee, was cleaning a gun with the care that a veteran huntsman in his leisure moments bestows on that operation. He displayed about his person, however, no game-bag, nor any other of the paraphernalia that indicate departure for or return from the chase, and two women who were seated near watched him apprehensively, apparently under the influence of a terror which they were unable to conceal. Any one who might have witnessed the scene from a hiding-place among the shrubbery would doubtless have shuddered no less than did the man's wife and aged mother-in-law. Evidently, a huntsman whose object is the killing of small game does not take such minute precautions, and yet more, in the department of the Aube, does not carry a long rifle of heavy calibre.

"Are you going after deer, Michu?" his handsome young wife asked him with an air as cheerful and unconcerned as she could call up.

Before he made answer Michu looked at his dog, which, stretched at full length and basking in the warm sunshine, his head cradled between his extended paws in the pretty attitude characteristic of animals of his breed, had raised his head, and, looking straight before him, was scenting the breeze, now down the long avenue that stretched away for a quarter of a league, now in the direction of a crossroad that debouched into the round-point on the left.

"No, not deer this time," Michu replied, "but a beast that I don't want to miss—a lynx." The dog, a handsome setter with a white and liver-colored coat, gave a low growl. "Good dog!" Michu ejaculated to himself. "Spies, eh? The country is overrun with 'em."

Mme. Michu raised her fine eyes appealingly toward heaven. A pretty, blue-eyed, golden-haired woman, with the form of an antique statue and a grave, somewhat mel-

ancholy and careworn face, she appeared to be suffering the corroding influence of some bitter and devastating grief. The husband's appearance might in some sort serve to explain the terror of the two women. The laws of physiognomy are unalterable, not only in their application to the reading of character, but also relatively to the fatality of existence. There are faces that speak as loudly as prophecies. If it were possible to obtain absolutely truthful likenesses of those who perish on the scaffold—and these theoretical statistics are of the highest import to society—the science of Gall and Lavater would prove beyond a peradventure that all those unfortunates, even those of them who were innocent, were stamped on their face with strange and abnormal signs and tokens. Yes, Fate sets her seal unmistakably on the face of him who is foreordained to die a violent death! And that seal, plainly visible to the eye of the observing, was stamped in distinct characters on the countenance of the man with the rifle.

Michu, short and stocky of build and, albeit he was of a somewhat lymphatic temperament, agile and quick as a monkey in his movements, had a white, tallowy face with stunted, misshapen features of the true Tartar type and a pair of small bloodshot eyes, the decidedly unornamental and sinister appearance of all which was not improved by a shock of coarse, crinkly red hair. In particular the eyes, of a yellowish cast, fixed, stony and unwinking as those of the tiger or of some deadly ophidian, affording no evidence of inward warmth, nor any the slightest scintilla of responsive feeling, struck terror to the heart of the beholder and chilled his soul. The ever-present contrast between the immobility of those eyes and the activity of the body helped to accentuate the involuntary repulsion that Michu infallibly inspired in every one at first sight. Action in this man, with whom it was always a word and a blow, and sometimes the blow before the word, flowed from a single dominating idea; as in animals life, devoid of all reflection, is wholly at the service of the ruling instinct. Since 1793 he had worn



his red beard *en éventail*. Even though, in the time of the Terror, he had not been president of a Jacobini club, this distinctive peculiarity of his appearance would of itself have made him an object terrible to behold. The Socratic face, with its short, turned-up nose, was surmounted by a lofty forehead, so prominent, however, as to overshadow the other features and give them by comparison an aspect of insignificance. The ears, large and well placed, seemed endowed with the faculty of motion, as are those of wild animals, always on the *qui vive*. The lips, generally parted, as is the way with country folk, disclosed a set of teeth white and strong as almonds, but unevenly distributed. A luxuriant growth of whiskers served as a frame to the dull white face with its purple mottlings. The hair, cut short over the forehead but falling in ringlets beside the cheeks and at the back of the head, served by its ruddy lines as an admirable foil to bring out all that was strange and unusual on that physiognomy so strongly marked by the hand of Fate. At that moment the rays of the declining sun, falling aslant upon the little group, cast their full radiance on the three faces, up into which the dog from time to time looked with a wistful, inquiring glance. The setting of the stage, too, on which the drama was enacted, was of the most magnificent description. The round-point of which we have spoken is situated at the farthest extremity of Gondreville Park, one of the finest estates in France, and certainly quite the finest in the department of the Aube. It comprises magnificent avenues of immemorial elms, a stately chateau erected under the supervision of Mansard, a park of fifteen hundred acres fenced in by walls, nine large and productive farms, a forest, mills, and fertile fields and meadows. This property, fit almost to be the residence of Kings, previous to the Revolution, had belonged to the Simeuse family. Ximeuse is the name of a fief situated in Lorraine. The name was pronounced Simeuse, and in course of time it had come to be spelled in the same way that it was pronounced.

The great fortune of the Simeuses, an ancient race at-

tached to the House of Burgundy, dates back to the time when the Guises menaced the existence of the Valois. Richelieu first, and after him Louis XIV., could not but remember the devotion shown by the Simeuses to the factious House of Lorraine, and frowned on them. The Marquis de Simeuse of those days, an old Burgundian, an old Guisard, and a Leaguer and Frondeur from away back (he had imbibed with his mother's milk all four of the great animosities that the nobility harbored toward the throne), came to live at Cinq-Cygne. This frequenter of courts, banished from the Louvre, had married the widow of the Comte de Cinq-Cygne, the younger branch of the famous House of Chargebœuf, one of the most illustrious names in the annals of the old province of Champagne, but the younger ultimately came to equal in celebrity and surpass in wealth the elder branch. This was how the Marquis, one of the richest men of his time, instead of ruining himself at court came to build Gondreville, constantly extending its bounds by the purchase of adjacent properties with the sole object of creating for himself an immense game preserve. He also erected in Troyes, at a short distance from the Hotel de Cinq-Cygne, the Hotel de Simeuse. These two houses, together with the Episcopal residence, were for a long time the only stone structures that Troyes could boast of. The Marquis disposed of Simeuse, the patrimonial fief, to the Duke of Lorraine. His son, during Louis XV.'s reign, made ducks and drakes of the paternal accumulations and even dipped a little into that splendid fortune, but that son, rising to be an officer of division and subsequently vice-admiral, made by his achievements glorious atonement for the follies of his youth. The Marquis de Simeuse, son of this intrepid mariner, yielded up his life at Troyes on the scaffold, leaving two sons, twins, who joined the emigration and at the present moment were in foreign parts, following the fortunes of the House of Condé.

In days long past and gone the round-point had been the designated rendezvous for the hunting parties of the Grand

Marquis. That was the name given by the family to the Simeuse who founded Gondreville. The lodge, situated within the park boundaries, built in the time of Louis XIV. and known as the pavilion of Cinq-Cygne, had had Michu as occupant since 1789. The village of Cinq-Cygne nestles under the trees of the extreme verge of the forest of Nodesme (a corruption of Notre-Dame), to which conducts the broad avenue with the quadruple rows of elms in which we have seen the faithful Courant, with his unerring scent, detect the trace of spies. Since the death of the Grand Marquis this pavilion had been neglected. The sea and the court had had greater attractions for the vice-admiral than the fields of fair Champagne, and his son had assigned the dilapidated pavilion as a dwelling-place to Michu.

This imposing structure is of red brick, with ornamentation of vermiculated stone at the angles and about the doors and windows. On either side is placed a great wrought-iron gateway of elaborate workmanship, but badly eaten by rust. Behind the grille extends a hollow way of great width and depth, from which has sprung a dense growth of lusty trees, while the parapets are capped by an intricate maze of heavy iron scrollwork of which the countless sharp-pointed spikes and prongs serve to warn off intruders.

The park walls had their beginning at two points directly opposite each other on the perimeter of the circle described by the round-point. Outside the park the magnificent demi-lane was encompassed by gentle slopes planted with elm-trees, while the other and corresponding portion inside the park was recognizable by its clumps of exotic trees. Thus the pavilion occupied the centre of the round-point described by those two horseshoes. Michu had converted the several apartments of the rez-de-chaussée into stables for his cows and horses, a kitchen, and a storeroom for firewood. Of the pavilion's ancient splendor the only remaining trace was an antechamber paved with alternate squares of black and white marble, access to which on the park side was afforded by one of those windows reaching to



the floor and glazed with little square panes, the like of which might still have been seen at Versailles, not so very long ago, before Louis-Philippe made the venerable city a hospital for the glories of France. Inside, the pavilion was bisected by a narrow hallway, in which, threatening early collapse, but not without a certain distinction, was an old wooden stairway conducting to the first story, in which were found five low-ceiled chambers of moderate dimensions. Over the bedrooms, not finished off, was a vast loft. The venerable edifice was topped by one of those towering, hood-like, slated roofs, pierced with numerous *œils-de-bœuf* and crowned by way of ornament with leaden figures, so much affected by Mansard, and with good reason; for, here in France, the flat roof, which finds such favor with the Italians, is entirely unsuited to the climate. Michu used these lofts as a place in which to store the provender of his cattle. The portion of the park contiguous to the old pavilion is laid out in the English style. At a distance of a hundred paces or so what had once been dignified with the title of "The Lake," but was now nothing more than a simple fish-pond well peopled by the finny tribe, made known its presence as well by the thin wreaths of mist that curled above the trees as by the clamors of countless toads, frogs, and other garrulous amphibians that are wont to lift up their voices about the sunset hour. A thousand small details—the hoary antiquity that rested on everything, the deep stillness of the woods, the dim, vaporous perspective of the avenue, the forest in the distance, the rust-gnawed ironwork and the great boulders with their velvet-like coating of moss and lichens—all contributed to lend an air of poesy to the structure, the remains of which may still be seen to-day.

Michu, at the moment of the commencement of this narrative, was leaning against a moss-grown parapet on which were spread his powder-flask, his cap, his handkerchief, a screwdriver, some woollen rags—all the implements required by the occupation that then engaged him and

which was regarded with such suspicion. His wife's chair was backed up against the outer door of the pavilion, over which, graven with great wealth of detail, was the escutcheon of the Simeuses with their proud device, *Si meurs!* The mother, in the garb of a peasant woman, had drawn her chair forward in front of Mme. Michu, so that the latter might place her feet upon its rounds and be protected from the moisture of the ground.

"Where is the youngster?" inquired Michu, speaking to his wife.

"Oh, prowling around the pond, as usual. Frogs and bugs have an attraction for him that the boy can't resist," replied the mother.

Michu gave an ear-splitting whistle. The alacrity with which his son responded to the summons showed the mastery which the foreman of Gondreville exerted over everybody. Since 1789, and more particularly since 1793, Michu had been almost the supreme ruler of the property. The terror with which he inspired his wife, his mother-in-law, a young farmhand, Gaucher by name, and Marianne, the maid of all work, was experienced in the same degree by every one for ten leagues round about. We may as well proceed to state the reasons for this feeling, which, moreover, will complete the portrait of Michu that we attempted and left unfinished.

The old Marquis de Simeuse had alienated his property in 1790, but in the hurry and bustle of those troublous times he had not been able to find a person to whom he dared intrust his great domain of Gondreville. Accused of carrying on a correspondence with the Duke of Brunswick and the Prince de Coburg, the Marquis de Simeuse and his wife were thrown into prison and condemned to death by the revolutionary tribunal of Troyes, of which Marthe's father was then president. The magnificent domain was put up and sold on behalf of the nation. It was cause of much comment, as well as of pretty general horror and indignation, that when the Marquis and the Marquise were exe-

cuted the head keeper of the Gondreville preserves, who had been elected president of the Jacobin club at Arcis, came over to Troyes to witness the proceedings. Michu, son of a simple peasant and an orphan, the recipient of countless favors from the Marquise, who had given him employment in her household and subsequently raised him to the responsible position of head keeper, was regarded by the fanatics as another Brutus; but all the more decent people of the community, after that exhibition of ingratitude, dropped him from the list of their acquaintance. The purchaser of the property was a man of Arcis named Marion, grandson of a former intendant of the Simeuse family. This man, who had been a lawyer previous and subsequent to the Revolution, feared the keeper and took him on as his foreman, paying him a stipend of three thousand francs and allowing him an interest in the proceeds of what was sold off the property. Michu, protected by his reputation as a patriot, and even at that time estimated to be worth some ten or twelve thousand francs, married the daughter of a tanner of Troyes, the apostle of the Revolution in that city, where he was president of the revolutionary tribunal. The tanner, a man of convictions, and whose character was in some respects not unlike Saint-Just's, was afterward implicated in the Babeuf conspiracy and, rather than stand a trial, killed himself. Marthe was the prettiest girl in Troyes, and for that reason her headstrong father, notwithstanding her shrinking modesty, compelled her to appear as the Goddess of Liberty at all republican junketings.

The purchaser of Gondreville visited his new acquisition not more than three times in seven years. His grandfather having held the position of intendant for the Simeuses, everybody in Arcis took it for granted that Citizen Marion was acting in the interest of the MM. Simeuse. As long as the Terror lasted the foreman of Gondreville, a fervent patriot, son-in-law to the president of the revolutionary tribunal of Troyes, and favored by Malin (Aube), one of



the representatives of the department, was treated with a certain amount of respect. But with the fall of the Mountain, and on his father-in-law's suicide, Michu saw himself made a scapegoat; everybody made haste to saddle on him, and on his father-in-law, actions with which he, individually, had no more to do than the man in the moon. The foreman rebelled against the injustice of the rabble; he stiffened himself and assumed a hostile attitude. Brumaire 18, however, wrought a change in him; he assumed and maintained that impenetrable reserve which is the philosophy of the strong and resolute; he ceased to kick against the pricks, he bowed to public opinion (in appearance, at least), and was content to act, not talk. This well-considered line of conduct gained for him a reputation for shrewdness and profundity, for public report assigned to his landed property alone at that time a value somewhere in the neighborhood of a hundred thousand francs. In the first place, his expenditure was next to nothing, and then no one could question the means by which he had acquired his fortune, coming as it did from what was left him by his father-in-law and from the six thousand francs that his salary and perquisites brought him in year by year. Although he had occupied his responsible position for a dozen years, and there was no secret whence he had derived his wealth, when, in the early years of the Consulate, he purchased a farm for which he counted out fifty thousand francs in cold cash, there was no end of insinuation against the former adherent of the Mountain, and everybody in Arcis declared that he was trying to amass a great fortune in order to thereby reinstate himself in public opinion. Unfortunately, however, just as he was passing out of men's minds and beginning to be forgotten, a trivial incident, distorted and exaggerated as usual by the gossip of the neighborhood, revived the general belief as to the inherent ferocity of his nature.

Returning from Troyes one evening in company with some peasants, among whom chanced to be the farmer who

held the lease of Cinq-Cygne, he dropped a paper in the road; the farmer, who was the last man in the little procession and could read writing, stoops and picks it up; Michu turns and sees the paper in the man's hand; quick as a flash his hand goes to his belt, he draws a pistol, cocks it, and warns the farmer on peril of his life not to attempt to unfold the document. Michu's action was so swift, so violent, his eyes flashed with such fierceness, his accents were so terrifying, that everybody shook with terror. As was quite natural, there was feud from that time between Michu and the lessee of Cinq-Cygne. The fortune of Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne, own cousin to the Simeuses, was reduced to one solitary farm; she occupied her chateau of Cinq-Cygne. She lived only for her cousins, whose playmate and constant companion she had been in the old days at Troyes and Gondreville. Her only brother, Jules de Cinq-Cygne, who had emigrated before the Simeuses, had died a soldier's death before Mayence, but, owing to a somewhat unusual circumstance, and of which further mention will be made hereafter, the family name did not become extinct in default of male heirs. The trouble between Michu and the tenant of Cinq-Cygne created a tremendous pother in the department, and lent additional darkness to the mystery that seemed to enshroud Michu; but that was not the only circumstance which caused people to look at him askance. A few months after these occurrences Citizen Marion, accompanied by Citizen Malin, paid Gondreville a visit. There was a rumor in circulation that Marion was about to transfer the property to the latter individual, who had been much befriended of late by political events and whom the First Consul had seated in the Council of State by way of recompense for services rendered on the 18th of Brumaire. The quidnuncs of the little city of Arcis thereon made up their minds that Marion had been acting as the instrument of M. Malin, and not of the MM. Simeuse. The all-powerful Councillor of State was the most important personage in Arcis. His recommendation had placed one of

his political allies in the prefecture at Troyes, he had saved from the conscription the son of one of the Gondreville farmers, a man named Beauvisage; his helpfulness seemed inexhaustible. The transaction between the two friends, therefore, was not likely to find any one to object to it in the neighborhood, where Malin's influence was then, and is to-day, paramount. It was the beginning of the Empire. Those who to-day read the history of the French Revolution will never know what immense strides were made by public opinion between the momentous events which succeeded one another so rapidly in those stirring times. The universal longing for peace and tranquillity experienced by everybody after so many years of turmoil and confusion engendered complete oblivion of antecedent occurrences, even when they were of the gravest and most important character. History aged rapidly, matured as it was continually by so many and such ever-changing interests, always fresh, always burning. So nobody, unless possibly it might have been Michu, bothered himself to look into the antecedents of the transaction, which appeared perfectly simple and aboveboard. Marion, who at the time had bought Gondreville for six hundred thousand francs in assignats, sold it for a million crowns in coin of the realm; but the only sum actually paid over by Malin was the registration fees. Grévin, a comrade of Malin's in the days when they were both clerks together, naturally lent himself to this somewhat irregular proceeding, and received his reward in due course from the Councillor of State, who established him as a notary at Arcis. When tidings of these matters reached the pavilion, brought by the tenant of a neighboring farm known as Grouage, situated between the forest and the park to the left of the elm-tree avenue, the color departed from Michu's face and he left the house. Marion was the object of his quest, and after a little he discovered him walking, alone, in one of the alleys of the park.

"You are thinking of selling Gondreville, I hear, monsieur?"



"Yes, Michu, yes. You will have a great man, a man of standing, for your new master. The Councillor of State is the friend of the First Consul, he is on terms of intimacy with all the ministers; he will be a protector to you."

"It was for him, then, that you were holding the property?"

"I don't say that, exactly," Marion replied. "I was not quite certain at the time how best to invest my money, and accordingly put it into national property, where it would be safe; but I have not much inclination to retain possession of an estate that belonged to a family in which my father—"

"Was intendant, a hired servant!" Michu aggressively replied. "But you will not sell the property. I want it, I do, and can pay for it—"

"You?"

"Yes, I, even I!—eight hundred thousand francs, in good gold coin."

"Eight hundred thousand francs!—Where did *you* get eight hundred thousand francs?" sneered Marion.

"That is my business," Michu replied.

Then, lowering his voice, he added in a milder tone:

"My father-in-law saved the necks of many people!"

"You speak too late, Michu; the bargain is completed."

"You will undo it, monsieur!" cried the foreman, and, grasping his employer's hand, he twisted and wrung it as in a vise. "I am despised and hated, I wish to be rich and powerful. I must have Gondreville—must! do you hear? I don't value my life a pin, and either you will sell me the property or I will spatter your brains upon the floor!"

"But I must have time to arrange matters with Malin, and he is not an easy one to deal with."

"I will give you twenty-four hours, and mind, you are not to breathe a word of this, otherwise I will slit your throat with as little compunction as I would slice a turnip."

Marion and Malin left the chateau under cover of the

night. Marion was badly frightened, and faithfully related to the Councillor of State all the particulars of his rencounter, requesting him to keep an eye on the foreman. There was no way by which Marion could release himself from the obligation of making over the property to him who had virtually paid for it, and Michu did not appear to be the sort of man either to comprehend or to listen to any reasoning of that nature. Besides, this service rendered by Marion to Malin was intended to be, and was, the origin of his own and his brother's political fortune. Malin in 1806 had Marion the lawyer made first president of one of the imperial courts, and subsequently, when the office of receiver-general was created, he obtained the receivership of the department of the Aube for the lawyer's brother. The Councillor of State advised Marion to go and take up his abode in Paris, and notified the head of the police, who detailed men especially for his protection. However, not to drive him to extremities, and perhaps also with the idea of keeping him under surveillance, Malin kept Michu on as foreman under the supervision of the notary at Arcis. Thereafter Michu, who became more and more secretive and morose, had the reputation of a man capable of every sort of evil. Malin, Councillor of State, a dignity which the First Consul had invested with a consideration equal to that of a minister, and one of the framers of the Code, played a great part at Paris, where he had bought one of the handsomest hotels in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, having first married the only daughter of one Sibuelle, a rich tradesman of none too good repute, whom he associated with Marion in the receiver-generalship of the Aube. He had returned only once to Gondreville, relying entirely on Grévin to protect his interests there. And then, too, what had he to fear, he who had formerly represented in the Chamber the district of the Aube, from a quondam president of the Jacobin Club of Arcis? Still, however, the unfavorable opinion of Michu that was so prevalent among the masses was disseminated, by an entirely natural process, and



took root among the bourgeois. Marion, Grévin and Malin, without specifying reasons or committing themselves, let it be known as their opinion that he was a dangerous character. The local authorities, instructed from headquarters to exercise surveillance over the keeper, did nothing to remove the generally accepted belief. It began to be subject of speculation among the people of the neighborhood how it was that Michu kept his place so long, but the forbearance of his employer was attributed to the terror he inspired. Can any one wonder, now, that the expression of Michu's wife's face was always sad and troubled?

In the first place, Marthe had been brought up by her mother in principles of strictest piety. Rigid Catholics, they had both been sufferers by reason of the old tanner's opinions and behavior. Marthe could never think without a blush of the days when, rigged out as a heathen goddess, she had been compelled to make herself a spectacle for the delectation of the populace of Troyes. Her father had forced her to marry Michu, whose evil reputation never mended and of whom she stood in too great fear to be able to judge him impartially. Amid all her doubts and fears, however, the young wife had a dim consciousness that she was loved, and deep down in her heart there resided a wealth of genuine affection for the terrible man who was her husband; she had never known him to be guilty of an unlawful action, and never in all their married life—to her, at least—had he raised a hand or spoken a word in anger. In fact, he seemed to make it a part of his religion to anticipate her wishes. Believing himself to be a disagreeable object in his wife's sight, the poor outcast remained away from home as much as possible. And thus Marthe and Michu, through their imperfect acquaintance with each other, lived together on terms of what is called nowadays "armed neutrality." Marthe, who lived a life of seclusion, suffered keenly from the odium which, for the past seven years, had been visited on her, as though she had been a hangman's daughter. On more than one

occasion, as the people living on the farm of Bellache, situated out on the plain to the right of the avenue and rented to a man named Beauvisage, an adherent of the Simeuses, passed the door of the pavilion, she had seen them point that way and heard them say to one another:

"There's where the two Judases live!"

The striking resemblance, and in which he seemed to take a certain strange delight, that existed between the keeper's face and that of the thirteenth apostle had obtained for him that unflattering cognomen throughout the neighborhood. That source of sorrow and annoyance, conjointly with ill-defined and unintermittent apprehensions for the future, had operated to make Marthe grave and careworn beyond her years. Nothing is more saddening than to be the victim of an unmerited opprobrium from which one knows he might, but may not, relieve himself. What a noble inspiration for a picture might not a painter have found in that little family of outcasts surrounded by some of the loveliest scenery of Champagne, where the landscape is in general dull and unattractive!

"François!" the foreman sharply cried by way of hastening his son's lagging steps.

François Michu, a boy about ten years old, found his fill of enjoyment in the park and the forest, and exercised sovereign rights in his small way: the fruits were his for the plucking, he chased the rabbits and other "small deer"; he had no cares or troubles; he was the one happy member of that family, isolated in the country by its location between the park and the forest, and no less isolated morally by the hostility and repulsion with which every one regarded it.

"Gather up all that you see there," said the father to his son, pointing to the articles on the coping of the parapet, "and put it away where it belongs. Now look me in the eyes—you love your father and mother, I suppose?"

The boy darted forward with outstretched arms to embrace his father, but Michu put out his hand and kept him off.

"It is well. You are a little too prone to prate and chatter of what goes on here," said he, bending on the lad his two eyes that blazed fiercely as a wildcat's. "Now mark what I say: you are not to reveal to anybody, to Gaucher, to the men of Grouage and Bellache, not even to Marianne, who loves us and can be depended on, any the slightest circumstance of what happens here, for if you do you will cause your father's death. Don't let it occur again, and I will overlook your indiscretion of yesterday."

The child began to cry.

"There, there, don't cry; but whenever anybody asks you a question, give him the answer that the peasants always make, say 'I don't know.' There are men prowling about the neighborhood of whom I don't like the looks. Sufficient!—You heard what I said, you two?" he asked, turning to his women folk. "Do you also keep your mouths shut."

"My friend, what are you going to do?"

Michu, pouring down the barrel of his rifle the charge of powder that he had measured out with extreme deliberation, stood the weapon against the parapet and replied to Marthe:

"No one knows that I have this rifle; place yourself there before me."

Couraut, erecting himself on his forepaws, set up a furious barking.

"Intelligent animal, good dog!" exclaimed Michu. "I knew there were spies about."

One feels intuitively when he is watched by a spy. Couraut and Michu, who seemed to possess a common intelligence that served the pair of them, lived together much after the manner of the Arab and his steed in the desert. The keeper understood every intonation of Couraut's voice and the ideas they were intended to express, in the same way that the faithful animal read his master's thoughts by looking into his eyes or by scenting the exhalations of his person.



"What is your opinion of those chaps?" asked Michu in a low voice, addressing his wife and directing her attention to two sinister-looking individuals who appeared just then in one of the lateral alleys and seemed to be making for the round-point.

"What's up? They are Parisians!" said the mother-in-law.

"Ha! is that so?" exclaimed Michu. "Take my rifle and hide it somewhere," he whispered to his wife; "they are coming this way."

The two Parisians, as they made their way across the round-point, presented a pair of types on which a painter would surely have seized with avidity. The first, he who appeared to be the subaltern, rejoiced in a pair of cavalry boots which, limp from length of use, had fallen down the leg and now disclosed to the spectator's view a considerable portion of very attenuated, weedy calf incased in silk stockings, gorgeously striped but not remarkable for cleanliness. The small clothes, of apricot-colored corduroy and supplied with metal buttons, were, speaking without exaggeration, roomy; their wearer could certainly have never found himself incommoded in them, and their numerous creases told by their location and the direction in which they ran that said wearer was a person of sedentary occupation. The waistcoat of piqué, profusely embroidered and cut, if we may be allowed the expression, extremely *décolleté*, being fastened, in fact, by a single button in the region of the abdomen, imparted to this extraordinary person an air that was all the more rakish and captivating that his thick black hair, worn long upon the forehead, was allowed to wander adown the cheeks in long festoons of corkscrew curls. Two watch-chains—not of meretricious gold, but of the more durable and useful steel—depended from his fob. The shirt-front was set off by a jewel of great price, a blue and white cameo pin. The coat, of a pale snuff color, commended itself to the caricaturist by a long tail which, seen from the rear, bore such a perfect

resemblance to a codfish that the name of that inhabitant of the vasty deep was forthwith assigned to it. The *habit en queue de morue* remained in style for ten years, almost as long as Napoleon's empire. The loosely tied cravat, wound around the neck in many folds, permitted the gentleman to settle his head down into it (as the tortoise withdraws at will its head into its carapace) almost to the ears. His pimply face, his long, big, brick-red proboscis of a nose, his toothless mouth, the lips of which parted now and again in a satyr-like grin of mingled menace and sensuality, his pendulous ears adorned with flashy golden earrings—these details, which might be taken in the reading for overdrawn caricature, were made terrible by a pair of little eyes placed obliquely in the head, more like the peepers of a pig than of a human being, and twinkling constantly with an insatiable avidity and a laughing, mocking, almost joyous cruelty. Those prying and perspicacious eyes that nothing escaped, of a blue cold as steel or ice, might have originally suggested that famous single eye, an invention of revolutionary times, that served as the dread emblem of the police and was the terror of evil-doers. He wore black silk gloves and carried in his hand a little cane. He was obviously a member of officialdom, for the swagger of his walk and bearing, the air with which he drew out his snuff-box and stuffed his nostrils with the titillating dust, betrayed the bureaucratic importance of the second-class man, the satellite, one of those who never forget to sign their name in big bold characters with a flourish after it, and whom orders from headquarters have dressed for the time in a little brief authority.

The other man, whose costume was much in the same taste, only it was elegant and worn with the utmost elegance, scrupulously neat in every minute detail, whose trim boots *à la Suwaroff*, drawn over skin-tight pantaloons, creaked musically as he walked, wore over his inner coat a spencer, an aristocratic fashion embraced and followed by "Clichyens" and the "gilded youth," and which survived both gilded

youth and Clichyens. In those days there were fashions that lasted longer than political parties, an anarchical symptom which 1830 has once more familiarized us with. This *parfait muscadin* was seemingly about thirty years of age. His manners were those of one accustomed to good society; he wore costly jewelry. His shirt collar came up to and rasped his ears. His air of self-consciousness, amounting almost to impertinence, told of a certain tacit superiority; his colorless face seemed to have been drained of every drop of blood; his thin, sharp nose had the sardonic twist of the nose on a death's head, and his sea-green eyes were impenetrable; there was no more chance of reading anything in their inscrutable depths than there was of eliciting an answer from the thin-lipped, tight-shut mouth. The man in front seemed rather a good sort of fellow when compared with this bloodless, dried-up young man, who was negligently swinging a neat rattan with a gold knob that flashed in the sunlight. The former might at a pinch consent to cut off a man's head, but the latter was capable of setting his snares and entangling beauty, virtue and innocence in the meshes of calumny and intrigue, and drowning or poisoning them in cold blood. He of the red face would have comforted his victim with cheerful if pointless talk, the other would not have so much as smiled. The former seemed to be about forty-five years old; he looked like a man to whom wine, women and good cheer were not altogether indifferent. Men of his stripe all have passions that make them slaves to their calling. But the younger man was equally without passions and without vices. He might be a spy, but he was first and foremost a diplomatist, and labored in his own particular vineyard in the cause of pure art. He planned, the other executed; he was the incarnation of the idea, the other was brute form and substance.

"We can't be a great way from Gondreville, my good woman?" said the young man, interrogatively.

"We don't use those forms of speech in this part of the world, we don't say, 'my good woman,' " spoke up Michu.



"Plain *citoyen* and *citoyenne* are good enough for us when we have anything to say to one another."

"Ah, indeed!" ejaculated the young man, quite naturally and without the least appearance of offence.

It is strange, how sudden and profound are the impressions oftentimes produced by causes apparently most trivial. Any old card-player, for instance, especially if he be a devotee of *écarté*, will relate from his experience the innumerable instances when he has seen "professionals" discomfited by a mere tyro. The gamblers are seated in silence around the green cloth, intent on the mysteries of their game; to them enters an unsophisticated looking, callow youth, a youth in whom there is not only no guile but no suspicion of that commodity, who, after calmly surveying the assemblage for a moment, drops into a chair and calls for cards. The gamblers look at the new-comer distrustfully; something, they cannot tell what, in his appearance, his voice, his manner, his way of shuffling the cards, perplexes and disconcerts them; they hesitate, they waver, their nerve forsakes them, they are panic-stricken and put ignominiously to rout. Michu, at sight of the young man, was overcome by a prophetic panic of very much this kind. A presentiment of something terrible assailed him; confused, dim visions of the scaffold and the headsman's axe rose before his mind's eye; a voice whispered in his ear that the *muscadin* held his fate in his hand, though thus far the two men had no common interest. For this reason his speech had been unconciliatory; it had been his intention to be, and he had been, offensive.

"You are in the service of Malin, the Councillor of State, aren't you?" inquired the second of the Parisians.

"I am my own master," Michu curtly replied.

"Well, mesdames," said the young man, modulating his voice to a tone of perfect politeness, "would you be so kind as to inform us if Gondreville is near? M. Malin is awaiting us there."

"You see there the park," said Michu, indicating with his finger the great gate, which stood open.

"Why do you hide that rifle, my pretty child?" inquired the young man's jolly companion, whose attention had been attracted by the glint of the barrel as he came in at the gate.

"You keep it up, even in the country!" the young man exclaimed with a smile.

The two turned and came back, influenced by a common suspicion which the foreman understood, notwithstanding the impassibility of their countenance; Marthe suffered them to take and examine the rifle—a proceeding that evidently had not the approval of Couraut, who barked and showed his teeth—for she felt sure that Michu was meditating mischief and was almost glad to see the strangers so perspicacious. Michu cast on his wife a look that made her shudder, then took the rifle and, carefully selecting a bullet from his pouch, proceeded to insert it in the bore, entirely willing, it appeared, to accept all the terrible consequences that he foresaw as likely to result from the day's occurrences, the unlucky meeting and subsequent discovery of the firearm. He appeared to hold his life cheap, and his wife, watching him, saw clearly through his fatal resolution.

"You are troubled with wolves about here, I suppose?" said the young man, addressing Michu.

"There will always be wolves where there are sheep. We are in Champagne; look, there is a forest. But we have wild boars, too; we have game, great and small—in fact, we have a little of everything," Michu made answer in a tone of banter.

"I wouldn't be afraid to bet, Corentin," said the elder of the twain, exchanging a look of intelligence with his companion, "that that chap is my Michu—"

"You and I never tended hogs together," the foreman interjected.

"No; but we have presided at Jacobin meetings, citizen," retorted the old cynic; "you at Arcis, I, somewhere else. You continue to observe the manners of the carmagnole,



but the carmagnole is not in fashion nowadays, my lad."

"The park seems to be of large extent, we might well lose our way; if you are the foreman, conduct us to the chateau," the man addressed as Corentin peremptorily commanded.

Michu whistled for his son and continued his occupation of ramming the ball down in the gun. Corentin regarded Marthe with an indifferent eye, while on the other hand his companion had the appearance of being captivated; but he remarked in her traces of anxiety that had escaped the notice of the elderly libertine, he in whom the sight of the rifle had inspired terror. The characters of the two worthies were depicted to a nicety in that small circumstance of such great importance.

"I have something to attend to elsewhere in the forest," said the foreman; "sorry I can't render you that service in person; my boy, though, will guide you to the chateau. Which route did you take in coming to Gondreville? Did you come by way of Cinq-Cygne?"

"We also had business in the forest, just as you have," Corentin replied, without apparent irony.

"François," said Michu, "conduct these gentlemen to the chateau by the side paths, so that nobody may see them; they don't care to travel on the highway. Come here first!" he added on perceiving that the two strangers had turned their back and were moving off, conversing together in an undertone.

Michu took his son in his arms and embraced him almost with tenderness, with an expression that confirmed the apprehensions of his wife; she felt cold chills running down her back, and looked at her mother dry-eyed, for somehow she could not weep.

"Begone," said Michu to his son.

And he watched him until he had entirely disappeared. Couraut pricked up his ears, looked over toward the Grouage farm, and began barking.

"Oh! 'tis Violette," remarked the foreman. "This is the third time that he has passed this way since morning. What's in the wind, I wonder? There, there, Couraut, enough!"

A few minutes later a horse was heard approaching on the road at an easy trot.

Violette, perched on one of those worn-out nags which, by reason of their cheapness, find favor with the farmers in the environs of Paris, displayed a rugged, deeply seamed face of the color of mahogany, surmounted by a round-topped, broad-brimmed hat which gave an added sombreness to his dull complexion. His small, sly, bright gray eyes attested the unreliability of a treacherous nature. His pipe-stem legs, protected knee-high by gaiters of white canvas, disdaining the support of the stirrups, hung dangling, ballasted by the weight of heavy clouted high-lows. Over his jacket of blue cloth he wore a black and white striped limousine. His gray hair hung down upon his back and shoulders in a tangled mass of curls. This costume, the little chunky, short-legged gray horse, and the rider's manner of bestriding him—stomach well advanced, shoulders back, the big, bare, dirty hand clutching a miserable, much-mended bridle—all depicted in Violette one of those ambitious, cunning, avaricious peasants whose sole end and aim in life is to be landowners, who must and will have land, cost what it may. The slit in the lower part of his face, called by courtesy a mouth, with its thin blue lips, might have been made by a bungling surgeon with his bistoury, and the close network of wrinkles that covered every inch of cheeks and forehead laid an embargo on anything like free play of the physiognomy, to the contours of which was confined all power of expression. Those hard, set, stern lines appeared to speak in terms of menace, and that notwithstanding the air of humility which the great majority of country folk are so proficient in assuming, and beneath which they conceal their calculations and emotions as savages and Orientals dissemble theirs under a cloak of immov-

able gravity. Starting as a simple peasant and day laborer, now the occupant on lease of the fertile farm of Grouage, thanks to a policy of meanness and malevolence systematically pursued, he still adhered to that policy now that he had attained a position which far surpassed all the wildest and most fanciful dreams of his youth. He wished that evil might befall his neighbor, and he wished it with all his heart. Whenever he could in any way contribute to that laudable end he did so, cheerfully, ungrudgingly, lovingly. Violette was frankly envious, but in his manifestations of spite and malice, he took good care to keep within the strict letter of the law, therein following the example of a political party that happens to be in opposition. He firmly believed that his fortune depended on other people's ruin, and every one who chanced to be above him in the social scale was in his eyes an enemy to combat whom all methods were justifiable. Characters like him are by no means unusual among the French peasantry. The great concern with him at the present moment was to get from Malin a renewal of the lease of his farm, the old one having only six years to run. Envyng the foreman his good fortune, he kept close watch on him; the people of the neighborhood did not look favorably on his relations with the Michus, but the calculating farmer, in the hope of seeing his lease renewed for another dozen years, watched for opportunities of ingratiating himself with government or, which amounted to the same thing, with Malin, who had lost all confidence in Michu. Violette, with the assistance of the *garde champêtre*, the park ranger at Gondreville, and certain old women who resorted to the forest to pick up sticks, kept the Commissary of Police at Arcis posted as to Michu's every movement. That functionary had tried, but unsuccessfully, to enlist Marianne, the maid of all work, in the service of the government, but Violette and his adherents were kept fully informed of everything that happened by Gaucher, the little domestic, in whom Michu reposed implicit confidence and who was all the time "giving



away" his master to the enemy in return for such trifles as fancy waistcoats, sham jewelry, cotton stockings, sweets and pastry. The lad, however, did not know that he was injuring his employer by his prattle. Violette constantly gave an exaggerated importance to all Michu's actions, stretching his conscience and using all sorts of absurd suppositions and hypotheses to impart to them an appearance of criminality, always, of course, in the absence of the foreman, who was perfectly aware, however, of the despicable role that the old fellow was playing under his very roof, and who sometimes gave himself the pleasure of mystifying him.

"Your affairs seem to be pressing over at Bellache, that you are so soon here again," said Michu.

"Again! that is not a friendly word, Monsieur Michu. Do you think that is a nice way for one to speak to an old friend? Where did you get that rifle? I never saw it before."

"It grew in a field of mine that yields famous crops of rifles," replied Michu. "Look, I'll show you how I sow 'em."

The foreman aimed the piece at a mullein that stood by the roadside some thirty paces distant, pulled the trigger, and presto! the weed was headless.

"Is it for your master's protection that you keep that ruffianly firearm? Perhaps it was he who gave it to you—"

"He came all the way from Paris expressly to fetch it," Michu answered with an unmoved countenance.

"So?—The fact is, his journey has created no end of talk down here, among all sorts of people, all over the country. Some say that he is in disgrace and is going to resign all his offices; others, that he wants to see for himself just what is going on down here. By the way, why does he drop down on us in this manner, without so much as saying, 'Look out there!' for all the world like the First Consul? Did you know he was coming?"

"I am not in his confidence; he and I are not so thick together as that."

"Then you haven't seen him yet?"

"I hadn't heard of his arrival until I got back from patrolling the forest," replied Michu, who was reloading his rifle.

"He has sent for M. Grévin to come to him from Arcis. I suppose they'll be tribuning up something between 'em."

Malin had been a tribune in his day.

"Take me with you, will you, if you're going Cinq-Cygne way," the foreman requested of Violette; "I have business there."

Violette did not fancy the idea, however, of riding double with a man as vigorous as Michu; he dug his spurs into his horse and clattered off. "Judas" shouldered his rifle and walked away down the avenue.

"Michu is contriving something against somebody; who is it, do you suppose?" Marthe asked her mother.

"I don't know," replied the other, "but I have noticed that ever since M. Malin's arrival he has been very glum. But let's go in, it is beginning to rain."

The two women were safely seated in the shelter of the chimney-piece when they heard Couraut raise his voice.

"Here comes my husband!" Marthe exclaimed.

Presently Michu's steps were heard upon the stairs; his wife, her mind ill at ease, went and sought him in their chamber.

"Is there any one about?" he inquired of Marthe in an agitated voice.

"Not a soul," she replied. "Marianne is away at the pasture with the cow, and Gaucher—"

"Where is Gaucher?" he asked.

"I don't know where he is."

"I am beginning to distrust that fellow. Go up to the garret and see if he is there—search the house thoroughly, in every hole and corner."

Marthe did as she was bid. When she returned she found Michu on his knees, praying. She was alarmed.

"What is amiss with you?" she asked.

The foreman rose and took his wife around the waist, strained her to his bosom, pressed a kiss upon her forehead, and answered in accents of deep feeling—

“Remember this, my poor wife, in case you and I are to be parted to meet no more, that I always loved you truly.— Follow in every detail the instructions contained in a letter buried at the foot of the larch-tree in yonder clump,” said he after a brief pause, designating to her a tree; “it is rolled up in a round tin case. You are not to read it until I am dead. Finally, befall me what may, remember that, in spite of man’s injustice, it was in the cause of God’s justice that this arm of mine was raised.”

Marthe, whose color had been gradually receding from her cheeks, was as white as her chemise; her eyes, staring and dilated with horror, were fixed on her husband; she essayed to speak, but her tongue refused its office, her mouth and throat were dry. Michu stole away noiselessly as a spectre; he had tied Couraut to the foot of the bed, and the poor brute lifted up his voice and howled, mournfully, dismally, as dogs howl in their despair.

There had been cause for Michu’s enmity toward M. Marion, but it had been diverted upon one who, in his opinion, was a far more guilty person than Marion; upon Malin, to wit, many of whose secrets were in possession of the foreman, who, owing to his position, knew more about the real facts of the Councillor of State’s political career than any other person. Michu’s father-in-law had enjoyed the confidence of Malin, so far as political affairs were concerned, ever since the latter, through Grévin’s influence, was sent up to Paris to represent the department in the Convention.

It may be as well at this stage of our narrative to give some account of the circumstances which operated to bring the Simeuses and the Cinq-Cygnés into relations with Malin, and to influence the destinies of the twin heirs and of Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne and, in a still more striking manner, the destinies of Michu and Marthe. The Simeuse and Cinq-Cygne



hotels at Troyes faced each other. When the populace, incited by leaders as adroit as they were cowardly, had pillaged the Hotel Simeuse, had unearthed in their hiding-place the old Marquis and his wife, accused of maintaining a correspondence with the enemy, and had turned them over to the soldiery who led them away to prison, the multitude, consistent as usual, began to bellow, "Now for the Cinq-Cygnés!" Those acute reasoners were unable to see how the Simeuses could be guilty and the Cinq-Cygnés innocent. The brave and honest Marquis de Simeuse, mindful of his two sons and fearing that their youthful impetuosity—they were then eighteen years old—might lead them into danger, had intrusted them, a short while before the breaking of the storm, to their aunt, the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne. Two old and faithful domestics of the Simeuse family acted as the young men's bodyguard and kept them under lock and key. The old man, who did not wish to see his race extinct, had given orders that knowledge of any fatality, should such occur, should be kept from his sons. Laurence de Cinq-Cygne, at that time twelve years old, was loved equally by the two brothers, and in like manner loved them equally in return. As is often the case with twins, the two Simeuses were such perfect likenesses of each other that for a long time their mother, as the only means by which she could be sure of their identity, used to have their clothes made of different colored cloth. The elder, he who came first into the world, was named Paul-Marie, the other Marie-Paul. Laurence, who had been advised of the true condition of affairs, showed herself equal to the occasion; with a woman's tact, alternately wheedling, commanding and entreating, she kept her cousins at her side up to the very last moment, when the populace broke down the gates and surrounded the Hotel Cinq-Cygne. The two brothers saw the danger at the same moment, and imparted their purpose to each other in one glance. Their resolution was formed on the instant; they armed their own two domestics and those of the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne, and, barricading

the doors, posted themselves at the windows, having first secured the blinds, with five able bodied servants and the Abbé d'Hauteserre, a relative of the Cinq-Cygnés. The eight brave champions kept up a terrible fire on the closely-packed mass. Every shot told. Laurence, instead of crying and wringing her hands, loaded the muskets with extraordinary sangfroid, or passed ammunition to those whose cartridge-boxes were exhausted. The Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne was on her knees.

"What are you doing, mother?" Laurence asked.

"I am praying," she replied, "praying for them and for you!"

A sublime answer, the same that was made, under similar circumstances, in Spain by the mother of the Prince of Peace. In less time than it takes to tell it eleven persons were killed and stretched on the ground amid the writhing, groaning wounded. One of two results generally succeeds a resistance as vigorous as was the present: either fresh fuel is added to the rage of the populace, or its ardor is cooled; either it goes to work with increased fury, or it disperses and slinks away. In the present instance those who were in the van, their fears getting the better of them, began to give way and would have retreated, but the main body, those who were there for purposes of robbery and slaughter, catching sight of the dead bodies, forthwith set up the cry—

"We are assassinated! The aristocrats are murdering the people!"

Some men, more level-headed than the rest, ran off in search of the representative of the people. The two brothers, then for the first time informed of the full extent of the day's horrors, suspected the former member of the Convention of a purpose to compass the ruin of their house, and their suspicion quickly became conviction. Thirsting for revenge, they stationed themselves under the porte-cochère, and stood there with their muskets at full cock, ready to kill Malin the moment he appeared. The Comtesse had lost her head; she saw her house in ruins, her daughter

murdered, and was bitter in her denunciations of her young relatives for the heroic defence that was the talk of France for a whole week's time. Laurence, in reply to Malin's knock, opened the door a little way. Seeing who was there the representative, relying on the terror his name everywhere inspired and on the feebleness of a young girl, a child, entered.

"What, Monsieur," said she in reply to the first words he spoke, a harsh demand what they meant by their resistance—"what, Monsieur, you pretend to give liberty to France, and cannot or will not protect people in their own homes? Shall the mob have license to burn our house over our heads, murder us, and are we to be denied the right of self-defence?"

Malin said not a word, nor stirred from his position.

"You, the grandson of a mason employed by the Grand Marquis to help build his chateau," said Marie-Paul—"you, to allow our old father, the victim of a lying calumny, to be dragged to prison!"

"He shall be restored to liberty," said Malin, who, seeing the young men tighten their grasp on their muskets, thought sure his end was come.

"You owe your life to that promise," declared Marie-Paul, with an air as if he meant what he said. "But, unless it is redeemed by nightfall, we shall know where to find you!"

"And as for that yelping, howling pack outside," said Laurence, "unless you send the curs away, the first bullet shall be for you. Now, Monsieur Malin, go!"

The conventionnel retired and harangued the crowd, expatiating on the sacredness of the domestic hearth, the habeas corpus, and "every Englishman's house his castle." He declared that the law and the people were supreme, that the law was the people, that the people should always act within the law, and that the laws must be supported. Stress of necessity made him eloquent, he prevailed on the rioters to disperse. But he never forgot the expression of contempt on the faces of the two brothers, or the ineffable



scorn of Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne's "Now go!" When, therefore, the time came round for selling on account of the nation the property of the Comte de Cinq-Cygne, Laurence's brother, the partition was made with all the rigor of the law. The district agents, obeying orders received from Malin, awarded Laurence only the chateau, the park, the gardens, and the farm known as Cinq-Cygne. Laurence was entitled, according to the strict letter of the law, to no more than her *légitime*, the nation intervening and assuming all the rights of the émigré, particularly as that émigré had borne arms against the Republic. During the evening succeeding this furious tempest Laurence, foreseeing the treachery, snares and foul play of every kind that would infallibly be contrived by the representative against her two cousins, besought them so earnestly to seek safety in flight that they mounted their horses and rode until they came to the advanced posts of the Prussian army. The brothers had hardly more than reached the forest of Gondreville when the Hotel Cinq-Cygne was invested again; the representative in person, attended by an armed force, had come to arrest the heirs of the house of Simeuse. He dared not attach the person of the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne, who lay ill in bed, prostrated by a raging nervous fever, or of Laurence, a child of twelve. The servants, fearing the heavy hand of the Republic, had disappeared. The next morning early, news of the two brothers' resistance and their flight—to Prussia, it was said—was circulated in the environs; a crowd of three thousand persons gathered, as if by magic, in front of the Hotel Cinq-Cygne, which was demolished with incredible rapidity. Mme. de Cinq-Cygne, who had been carried into the Hotel Simeuse, died there from shock and aggravation of her complaint. It was not until after these occurrences that Michu made his appearance on the political stage, for the Marquis and the Marquise remained in prison a matter of some five months. During this time the representative of the Aube had a mission. But when M. Marion sold Gondreville to Malin,

when the effects of the popular effervescence were forgotten in the district, then Michu understood Malin, fully and entirely—or thought, rather, that he understood him, for Malin, like Fouché, was one of those persons who have so many different faces, and in each of those faces such unfathomable depths of guile, that no man, even the most keen-sighted, can detect their motives while they are handling their cards, and it is only after the game is finished that it is at all possible to see through them.

In all his more important undertakings Malin never failed to take counsel with his faithful friend Grévin, the notary of Arcis, whose judgment of men and things, seen at a distance, was remarkably lucid, sound and accurate. This characteristic is the wisdom of a second-class man, and in it resides his strength. Now, in November, 1803, the affairs of the Councillor of State were in so delicate a condition that a letter might have compromised the two friends. Malin, who was looking forward to his appointment as Senator, was afraid to hold the conference in Paris; he left his hotel and came to Gondreville, assigning to the First Consul only one of the reasons which impelled him to make the journey, and which should enhance his reputation for zeal in Bonaparte's eyes, although his motives, so far from having any connection with the public weal, were of an entirely selfish nature. While Michu, then, was prowling and watching in the park, after the manner of a red Indian, awaiting a moment propitious to his vengeance, Malin, more politic, accustomed to make events subserve his ends, was conducting his friend to a grassy glade in the English garden, a lonely, retired spot, an ideal locality for a mysterious conclave. By taking care to keep to the middle of the space and not raise their voice, the two friends were in no danger of being overhead should there chance to be eavesdroppers about, and could change their subject of conversation if intruders came upon the scene.

"Why not have occupied a room in the chateau?" asked Grévin.



"Didn't you see the two men that the Prefect of Police sent down to me?"

Although Fouché, in the matter of the Pichegru-Georges-Moreau-Polignac conspiracy, was the life and soul of the consular cabinet, he did not then control the ministry of police, but, like Malin, was simply a Councillor of State.

"Those two men are Fouché's right and left arms. One, that young dandy whose face makes you think of a carafe of lemonade, who has vinegar on his lips and verjuice in his eyes, squelched the insurrection of the West in the year VII. in two weeks' time. The other is a pupil of Lenoir; he is the only one who maintains the great traditions of the police. I asked for a plain, every-day agent, supported by some one from the office, and they send me those two chaps. Ah! Grévin, there's not the least doubt about it, Fouché wants to have a look at my cards. That's why I left those gentlemen eating their dinner at the chateau; let them rummage all they please, they won't find Louis XVIII. there, or any trace of him."

"Well, well!" exclaimed Grévin; "what game are you engaged in?"

"*Eh!* my friend, a double game is not without its dangers; but this, counting in Fouché, is a three-handed one, and it may well be that he has heard something of the fact that I am in the secrets of the House of Bourbon."

"You?"

"Aye, even I."

"Doubtless you have forgotten Favras?"

These few words produced a visible impression on the Councillor.

"And how long has this been going on?" asked Grévin, after a pause.

"Since the time of the life consulate."

"No proofs, though?"

"Not that much," replied Malin, snapping his thumb-nail against one of his front teeth.

In a few brief words Malin described the critical position

to which Bonaparte was reducing England, then menaced by the camp of Boulogne, explaining to Grévin the import, thus far unknown to France and Europe, but suspected by Pitt, of the projected descent on Britain's shores; then he told of the rod which, on the other hand, England was preparing for Bonaparte. A tremendous coalition, embracing Austria, Prussia and Russia, maintained by British gold, would bring into the field a force of seven hundred thousand men. At the same time a formidable conspiracy was to extend its meshes over the entire territory of France, uniting in a common cause Montagnards, Chouans, the Royalists and their Princes.

"As long as Louis XVIII. saw himself confronted by three consuls, he trusted in the continuance of our divisions and dissensions, and believed that, with the help of one movement or another, he should be able to pay off the old scores of 13th Vendémiaire and 18th Fructidor," said Malin; "but the life consulship revealed Bonaparte's designs. It won't be long before he will rule France as Emperor. The former sous-lieutenant aspires to found a dynasty! but this time his enemies are bent on having his life, and the plot is arranged more skilfully than was that of the Rue Saint-Nicaise. Pichegru, Moreau, Cadoudal and the Duc d'Enghien are in it—and Rivière and Polignac, the Comte d'Artois' two nearest friends."

"What a conglomeration!" exclaimed Grévin.

"France is invaded by secret enemies; it is meant that the assault shall be delivered all along the line, the green and the dry are to be employed, the young and the old. A picked corps of a hundred men, commanded by Cadoudal, are to create a disturbance and engage the Consular Guard with the Consul among them."

"Well, why don't you denounce them?"

"For over two months the Consul, his Minister of Police, the Prefect and Fouché, have had hold of some of the threads of this widespread conspiracy; but they are not quite certain as to its extent, and are refraining from mak-

ing arrests so that when they do cast their net the haul may be complete."

"Looking at the matter in its legal aspect," said the notary, "the Bourbons have a far better right to conceive and carry into execution an enterprise against Bonaparte than Bonaparte had to conspire on the 18th of Brumaire against the Republic, whose child he was; *he* murdered his mother, *they* only seek to be restored to their own. I understand perfectly that the Princes, seeing the proscription lists closed, exemptions for cause accumulating, the Catholic religion reintegrated, and counter-revolutionary decrees multiplied, felt that their return was made more and more difficult, not to say impossible. Bonaparte is the only obstacle in the way of their return, and that obstacle must be suppressed—it is perfectly simple. Vanquished, the conspirators will be brigands; victorious, they will be heroes. Your perplexity seems to me natural enough."

"The plan is," said Malin, "to force Bonaparte to throw to the Bourbons the head of the Duc d'Enghien, as the Convention defied the monarchies by throwing to them the head of Louis Seize, to the end that he may be committed to the Revolution to the same extent that we are; otherwise, to overturn the present idol and future Emperor of the French people, and on the ruins erect the throne of our fathers. I am at the mercy of a chance event, of a lucky pistol-shot, of a machine similar to that of the Rue Saint-Nicaise, only it may prove more effective. I have not been told everything. It was proposed that I should convene the Council of State at the critical moment, and should introduce in that body measures looking to the restoration of the Bourbons."

"Wait," replied the notary.

"Impossible! It is imperative that I reach a decision without delay."

"Why so?"

"The two Simeuses are in the conspiracy, and are hanging about the neighborhood; I must either have them watched, allow them to compromise themselves, and in that manner



rid myself of them, or give them my protection on the sly. I asked for subalterns and am sent a pair of first-class lynxes, and they had to come by way of Troyes in order to gain over the gendarmerie!"

"You know the proverb, 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.'—Gondreville is the *Tiens*, the conspiracy is the *Tu auras*," said Grévin. "Neither Fouché nor Talleyrand, your two partners, are in the plot. Deal frankly with them. What! with all those who cut off King Louis XVI.'s head occupying places under government, with France full of men who have purchased national property, would you help to bring back those who will move heaven and earth to compel you to give up Gondreville? Unless they are imbeciles, the Bourbons will pass the sponge over everything we have done. Notify Bonaparte."

"A man of my rank is not a tale-bearer," said Malin, warmly.

"Your rank?" exclaimed Grévin with a smile.

"I am offered the seals."

"Ah, I understand your perplexity; it is for me, I suppose, to pierce the obscurity of these political fog-banks and find a safe door of exit. It is impossible to foretell what events may operate to bring back the Bourbons when a General Bonaparte has eighty warships and four hundred thousand men. The great difficulty, in prognosticating the course of political events, is to know to a certainty when a power, already tottering, will fall; but Bonaparte's, my dear fellow, is still in the ascending period. May it not be that Fouché, wishing to get rid of you, has sent his emissaries to pump you and learn your secret thoughts?"

"No, I can trust the ambassador. Besides, Fouché would never have sent me two monkeys such as those, who, knowing them as well as I do, couldn't fail to arouse my suspicions."

"I don't like the looks of the business," said Grévin. "Why should Fouché, unless he is beginning to mistrust



you and wants to test you, have sent those two particular men down here? Fouché is not the sort of man to indulge in a whimsey of that description without there being some motive for it."

"That settles it!" exclaimed Malin; "those Simeuses will never let me be at peace. Perhaps Fouché, who knows my position, does not wish to miss them, and thinks through their means to reach the Condés."

"Eh! my old friend, it won't be in Bonaparte's time that anybody will think of disturbing the proprietor of Gondreville."

Malin, chancing to raise his eyes, was just in time to catch sight of the glint of a musket-barrel through the dense foliage of a great linden.

"I wasn't mistaken; I knew I heard some rascal cocking a firearm," said he to Grévin, sheltering himself behind the trunk of a great tree, where the notary promptly joined him, alarmed by the precipitate movement of his friend.

"It is Michu," said Grévin, "I see his red beard."

"Don't let on that you are frightened," Malin continued, walking slowly away and repeating more than once, "What can the man have against the purchasers of this property? For it certainly was not you at whom that villanous gun was pointed. If he heard what we said it won't be so well for him! We should have done better to hold our conference in the open, but who the devil would have thought of distrusting the air around us!"

"There is always something to learn," replied the notary, "but he was a long distance away, and our conversation was carried on in a low tone."

"I shall mention the matter to Corentin," said Malin.

Not many moments after this Michu re-entered his house, pale as a sheet and deeply agitated.

"What ails you?" inquired his wife in affright.

"Nothing," he replied, and perceiving Violette, he started as he might have done at a clap of thunder.

Michu drew up a chair and seated himself tranquilly before the fire, into which he threw a letter that he took from one of those tubular tin boxes which soldiers use as a receptacle for their papers. This action, seeing which Marthe breathed like one from whose mind a great load has been removed, greatly puzzled Violette. The foreman stood his rifle in the jamb of the chimney-piece with perfect unconcern. Marianne and Marthe's mother were spinning by the light of a lamp.

"Come, François," said the father, "it's time to go to bed. Do you hear me, sir? Come along."

He seized the lad, none too gently, around the middle and lugged him away.

"Go down to the cellar," he commanded in a whisper when they were outside in the hallway, "take two bottles of Macon wine, pour out a third of their contents, and fill them up with the old Cognac that you'll find in bottles on the shelf; then doctor a bottle of white wine in the same manner, only making the proportions half and half. Make a neat job of it, and place the three bottles on the empty cask beside the cellar door. When I throw up the window leave the cellar, go to the barn, saddle my horse, get on him, proceed to the Poteau-des-Gueux, and there await my coming.—The young rascal, he never wants to go to bed," said the foreman on his return to the sitting-room. "He wants to know all, to see and hear everything that's going on, just like grown people. You'll be the ruination of my family, Père Violette."

"*Bon Dieu! Bon Dieu!*" cried Violette, "what can have happened to start your tongue going at that rate? I never knew you to make such a long speech."

"Do you think it's my way to let people spy on my actions, going and coming and poking their nose into my concerns, and never take notice of it? I tell you the way you have chosen is not the best way for you, Monsieur Violette. If you were with me, now, instead of being with those who are against me, I would do better by you than renew that lease."

"What would you do? Come, let's hear," asked the grasping peasant, pricking up his ears.

"I would sell you my property at a bargain."

"It isn't a bargain when a body has to pay," Violette sententiously remarked.

"I am thinking of leaving the country, and will let you have my farm of Mousseau, buildings, crops and stock, everything as it stands, for fifty thousand francs."

"For fact?"

"How does that strike you?"

"I'll have to take time to think about it."

"Suppose we talk the matter over. But I shall want something to bind the bargain."

"I have nothing."

"Your promise."

"Again!"

"Tell me who sent you here."

"I was returning from the place where I had business and wished to pass the time of day with you."

"Returning without your horse! Do you take me for a fool? You are lying to me, you shan't have my farm."

"Well, then, it was M. Grévin, if you must know! He said to me, 'Violette, Michu is needed here, go and fetch him. If he is not at home wait for him.' I understood that I was to remain here—"

"The sharpers from Paris, were they still at the cha-teau?"

"I wouldn't swear to it, but there was company in the salon."

"You shall have my farm, we will settle on the terms. Wife, go and bring the wine to wet the contract with. Fetch us the wine of Rousillon, the best there is, the wine of the ex-Marquis. We are not boys. You will find two bottles of it, and a bottle of white, on the empty cask beside the door."

"It's a go!" said Violette, who was never known to be intoxicated: "let's drink!"



"You have fifty thousand francs concealed under the floor of your chamber beside the bed; you will make 'em over to me fifteen days after the signing of the contract in Grévin's office."

Violette looked at Michu with a fixed, helpless stare and became deathly pale.

"Ah! you come peeping and prying into the affairs of an old Jacobin who has had the honor of presiding over the club of Arcis, and think he won't get onto you, do you? I am not blind, I'd have you know; I saw the fresh mortar where you had relaid the bricks, and didn't suppose that you took them up for the purpose of raising a crop of wheat in your bedroom.—Drink."

Violette, in his confusion, tossed off a great glass of wine without being conscious of its taste or quality; terror had transfixed him as with a rod of red-hot iron, the brandy was less potent than his avarice; he would have given anything could he have returned home and bestowed his treasure in another hiding-place. The three women looked at him and smiled.

"How do you like the wine?" Michu asked as he refilled the peasant's glass.

"P-p-pretty well."

"You will be a landowner, you lucky dog!"

After a half-hour of animated discussion over the time of yielding possession and the thousand and one other trivial, irrelevant questions of detail without which no peasant ever thinks of concluding a bargain, amid stout assertions, and fierce denials, glasses drained and replenished, cautious promises, assurances of good faith, and endless asseverations such as, "True, ain't it?—God's truth!—My last word!—As I was saying!—Strike me dead if—Hope this glass of wine may poison me if what I say isn't the exact truth!"—amid all this farrago Violette fell forward, head first, on the table, not dead nor simply drunk, but dead drunk. Michu looked into his eyes, and seeing them filled with vacancy ran and threw open the window.



"Where is that young scamp Gaucher?" he asked his wife.

"In bed."

"Do you, Marianne," the foreman enjoined on his faithful maid of all work, "go and sit by his door and keep an eye on him. Do you, mother," said he, "remain downstairs and mount guard over this dirty spy; have your wits about you, and let no one in who knocks unless it be François. It is a case of life or death with me," he added in a deep, hollow voice. "You must all be prepared to make oath, every one of you beneath my roof, that I have not left the house this night; you must adhere to that with your last breath, with your head upon the block.—Come, mother," said he speaking to his wife, "go get your hood and shawl, put on your shoes, and we will be off! No questions, I shall go with you."

For the better part of the last hour this man had exhibited in his looks and gestures a despotic, irresistible authority, derived from that common and mysterious source whence great men derive their extraordinary powers in moments of emergency: the great general animating his battalions to heroic deeds upon the battlefield, the great orator swaying the masses and carrying them, *nolens volens*, along with him from the hustings or the pulpit, and—we may as well acknowledge it—the great criminal in his audacious and desperate enterprises. It would almost seem as if it were by virtue of some supernatural influence, some unexplained, invisible effluence projected through space, that a man is thus enabled to infuse his personality into the minds and persons of his fellow men, compelling them to do his will, subjugating them, making them for the time his thralls. The three women felt instinctively that some terrible crisis was impending; they had a vague presentiment of something hanging over them in the swift, determined actions of the master, whose face shone, whose forehead was eloquent, whose eyes were bright as stars; they had seen his brow wet with great beads of sweat,

more than once his voice had rung out, imperiously, vibrant with rage and impatience. Marthe, therefore, obeyed him without questioning. Armed to the teeth, his rifle on his shoulder, Michu strode swiftly down the avenue, and soon they came to the open space where François lay hid among the furze and bracken.

"The youngster is no fool," Michu observed when he caught sight of him.

That was his first utterance. His wife and he had run so fast that there had been no opportunity for conversation.

"Return to the pavilion, hide in the leafiest tree you can find, and observe the park, the country roundabout," he said to his son. "We are all abed and asleep, remember; the door is to be opened to no one. Your grandmother is keeping watch, and will not stir until she hears your voice. Remember my injunctions and obey them to the letter. Your father's and mother's life is in your keeping. The authorities must never know that we were away from home to-night!"

After these words spoken in the ear of his son, who glided away through the thicket with the speed and silence of an eel through its bed of slime, Michu turned to his wife and said:

"Get up here! and put up a prayer to God for His assistance. Keep tight hold of me, the horse is liable to stumble."

Scarcely had these words passed his lips when the horse, into whose flanks Michu twice dug his heels and whose shoulders he held compressed in the vise-like grip of his powerful thighs, sprang forward with the speed of a racer; the animal seemed to divine his master's wishes; in a quarter of an hour the forest was behind them. Michu, who had pursued the directest route without once deviating from it in spite of the impenetrable darkness, stood on a projecting point at the edge of the wood whence the turrets and gables of the chateau of Cinq-Cygne were visible in the moonlight. He tied his horse to a tree, and with sure swift steps climbed an eminence that commanded a view of the valley of Cinq-Cygne.

The chateau, that Marthe and Michu stood contemplating for a moment, is a charmingly effective adjunct to the landscape. Although nothing to boast of either in respect of size or architecturally, it is not devoid of a certain archeological interest. This old fifteenth-century edifice, seated on an eminence and surrounded by wide, deep moats still filled with water, is built of mortar and rubble-stone, but its walls are seven feet thick. In its stern simplicity it serves admirably to illustrate the life, so rude and full of strife and yet so picturesque, of the days of feudalism. The chateau, artless and unpretending in appearance, consists of two huge, square, dull red towers, with between them a long stretch of buildings pierced with veritable *croisées*—great windows of which the panes are set, instead of in the wooden sashes of the present day, in a delicate tracery of solid stone carved to resemble the convolutions of a grape-vine. The staircase, placed in a pentagonal tower with a small ogival door, is outside the main structure, in the centre of the façade. Above the rez-de-chaussée, the interior of which was renovated in the time of Louis XIV., and the first story tower lofty roofs pierced with a multitude of windows adorned with sculptured tympana. In front of the chateau stretches a spacious lawn, off which the trees were felled not very long ago. On either side of the main entrance are two small houses that serve as dwellings for the gardeners, separated by a tasteless, insignificant grille, evidently of modern origin. To right and left of the lawn, which is bisected by a paved causeway, extend the stables, cowsheds, granaries, bakery, brewhouse, woodshed, poultry-yard, and other outbuildings, doubtless erected on ground once occupied by two wings of dimensions and appearance similar to the chateau of the present day. In ancient times, probably, the castle was rectangular in form and covered a much larger extent of ground; it was bastioned at the four corners with turrets *en poivrière* for archers and javelin men, its central front was protected by a huge tower, a grim, squat, frowning pile of masonry in the base of which was a low-arched,



forbidding-looking gateway, and visitors in those days, if they were so fortunate as to find the drawbridge lowered that spanned the moat, were confronted, not by a flimsy gate of ornamental ironwork, but by a serviceable portcullis. The two great towers, the conical pointed roofs of which still remained intact, and the central clock-turret, lent an air of picturesque dignity to the village. The church, likewise a structure of great antiquity, reared its tapering spire at a few yards' distance, and harmonized perfectly with the masses of the castle. The moon brought out in high relief all the quaint gables, pinnacles and pepper-box roofs, which appeared to be bathing in a sea of mellow light. Michu contemplated the old seigniorial mansion in a manner calculated to effect a revolution in the feelings of his wife, for his face, from which the angry passions had departed, displayed a softened expression in which were hope and something akin to pride. He bent his ear to catch the sounds that rose from the slumbering fields, his gaze scanned intently every quarter of the horizon; the hour was about nine, the moon was shedding floods of light upon the margin of the forest and, in particular, the eminence on which he stood was brilliantly illuminated. His position doubtless appeared undesirable to the foreman; he left it and made his way down to level ground, like one not wishing to be seen. In all the beautiful valley, however, inclosed on this side by the forest of Nodemes, no sound was heard calculated to inspire distrust or mar the perfect stillness of the night. Marthe, exhausted and trembling after her wild ride, was looking forward to a tragic dénouement of some sort. What was her role to be? Was she to participate in a good action or in a crime? At that moment Michu drew up alongside his wife and spoke in her ear.

"Go and knock at the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne's door," said he, "and ask to speak with her. When she appears request a private interview. Then, when there is no one by to hear, you will say, 'Mademoiselle, your two cousins are



in deadly peril; there is one waiting outside who can explain to you the why and wherefore.' Should she show signs of fear or appear disinclined to trust you, you will add, 'They are mixed up in the conspiracy against the First Consul, and the conspiracy is discovered.' Don't mention your name, we are too much objects of suspicion."

Marthe Michu looked her husband in the face and said:

"You would serve them, then?"

He interpreted her question as a reproach. "Well, what then?" he asked, his brows contracting in a frown.

"You do not understand!" Marthe cried, seizing Michu's hand, dropping on her knees before him, and kissing the big hairy hand that suddenly was wet with tears.

"Hasten! You can do your crying later," said he, giving her a swift strong embrace.

When the sound of his wife's footsteps was heard no longer the eyes of this man of iron were dim with tears. He had distrusted Marthe because of the opinions of her father, he had kept from her the secrets of his life; but now the true character of his wife appeared to him in all its lovely simplicity, as the grandeur of his was suddenly revealed to her. Marthe passed from the deep humiliation which results from the disgrace of a man whose name a woman bears to the celestial ravishment afforded by his glory; the passage was made at a single bound, without transition. Is it to be wondered at that she almost swooned for joy? Suffering the most cruel anxiety, she had, as she told him afterward, "walked in blood" from the pavilion to Cinq-Cygne, and the next moment had felt herself borne up to heaven on angels' wings. He, who believed himself unappreciated, who mistook his wife's reserve and melancholy for absence of affection, who had shunned her society and absented himself from the domestic hearth, concentrating all his tenderness upon their child, had instantaneously had borne in upon his mind all the hidden meaning of that woman's tears: she cursed the role that her beauty and a father's will had forced her to play. Joy, happiness had blazed for them

out of the centre of the storm with its purest flame, like a bolt of lightning. Each thought of those ten long years of misunderstanding, each was desirous to shoulder all the blame. Michu remained standing, motionless, hands crossed over the muzzle of his rifle and chin resting on his hands, lost in profound revery. Such a moment is compensation for all the pangs of the most cruel past.

Marthe, moved by a multitude of thoughts of the same nature as her husband's, was heavy-hearted by reason of the danger that threatened the Simeuses, for she understood everything, even the faces of the two inscrutable Parisians, but was unable to account for the presence of that rifle in her husband's possession. She ran with the speed of a wild fawn, and had reached the road leading to the chateau when she heard the sound of a man's steps behind her on the road. She gave a cry of alarm, which was immediately silenced by a heavy hand laid upon her mouth. The hand was Michu's.

"From my post on the hilltop I made out in the distance the glitter of the silver embroidery on uniform hats. There is a gap in the fence between the Tour de Mademoiselle and the stables; crawl through it and enter the grounds, the dogs will not molest you. Pass through the garden, summon the young Comtesse by knocking on her window, have her men saddle her horse and lead him around to the gap; I will be there as soon as I shall have discovered what those Parisians are up to and devised means to escape from them."

This danger, which descended on them like an avalanche, and against which it behooved them to guard, lent wings to Marthe's feet.

The Frankish name that is shared in common by the families of Cinq-Cygne and Chargebœuf is Duineff. Cinq-Cygne (five swans) became the name of the younger branch of the Chargebœuf family as a result of the defence of a castle conducted, in the absence of their father, by five daughters of that house, all noteworthy for the fairness of their complexion, and whom no one would have supposed

capable of such conduct. One of the early Counts of Champagne was pleased by that poetical name to perpetuate the memory of the exploit as long as the family should endure. After that remarkable feat of arms the daughters of the house were very proud, but the historians do not aver that all of them were fair. Laurence, the last of the line, in opposition to the Salic Law, inherited the family name, arms and fiefs. The King of France gave his approval to that patent of the Comte de Champagne by virtue of which the title and estates are not confined exclusively to direct heirs male. So Laurence was Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne, her husband would bear her name and assume her blazon, which had for its device the sublime answer made by the eldest of the five sisters to the demand for the surrender of the chateau, "Mourir en chantant!" (I die singing!) A worthy successor to those fair heroines, Laurence was of a whiteness that almost defies description. Every smallest reticulation of her blue veins was visible under the fine and satiny surface of her epidermis. Her hair, of the most charming imaginable hue of gold, accorded marvellously with her eyes of deepest azure. All her features, everything pertaining to her, was in the *genre mignon*. In her frail body, notwithstanding her slenderness and her complexion of milky whiteness, resided a soul fine-tempered as that of a man of loftiest character, but that no one, no matter how keen an observer, would have divined the existence of on seeing the calm, gentle, and at most times rather expressionless face, whose aquiline and somewhat blunted contours, seen in profile and in repose, reminded one faintly of the face of a sheep. This excessive gentleness, notwithstanding its nobility, appeared at times to verge almost on the stupidity of the ovine family. "I appear like a sheep in a dream!" she would sometimes laughingly remark. Laurence, who had little to say at most times, appeared to be dull of intellect rather than a person of dreams and fancies. Let there arrive a circumstance that made a call on her energies, however, forthwith the Judith concealed in the depths beneath



would stand forth revealed and become sublime, and such circumstances, unfortunately, had not been absent from her life. After the events that you know of, Laurence, orphaned at the age of thirteen, found herself an inmate of a house in Troyes opposite the site where but yesterday had stood one of the finest examples of the architecture of the sixteenth century, the Hotel Cinq-Cygne. M. d'Hauteserre, a relative and now her guardian, took the young heiress away with him to the country. This honest country gentleman, shocked by the death of his brother the Abbé d'Hauteserre, who had been brought down in the middle of the public square by a musket ball as he was fleeing in the disguise of a peasant, was in no position to protect the interests of his ward; he had two sons in the Princes' army, and every hour of the day, at the least sound, he imagined that the "municipals" of Arcis were coming to arrest him. Proud to have sustained a siege and in the possession of the fairness of her ancestresses, Laurence regarded with contempt the timid egotism of the old man, who bowed his head before the storm; she thought of nothing but to gain glory for herself. She defiantly hung the portrait of Charlotte Corday in her poor salon at Cinq-Cygne, and plaited a wreath of oak and laurel leaves with which to decorate the picture. She maintained a correspondence with the twins by means of express riders, in defiance of the law, which would have punished her with death. The messenger, who also took his life in his hands, brought back the answers. Subsequent to the disastrous events at Troyes, Laurence lived only for the royal cause. Her judgment of M. and Mme. d'Hauteserre was sufficiently accurate; when she had decided that they were well-intentioned but weak people, she simply dropped them from her sphere. Laurence was too just, as well as too sensible and kind-hearted, to be angry with them for innate defects of character which they could not help; ever courteous, amiable and affectionate toward them, she intrusted them with none of her secrets. Nothing tends more to make one secretive, to close up all the ap-



proaches of the soul, than constant dissimulation in the bosom of the family. Laurence, on attaining her majority, continued the worthy d'Hauterres in the management of her affairs as in the past. Provided the coat of her favorite mare was sleek and glossy, provided there was nothing to offend her fastidious taste in the attire of Catherine, her maid, and Gothard, her little page, all other matters were indifferent to her. Her mind was occupied with considerations of too great moment to permit of her descending to occupations which, had circumstances been different, would doubtless have found favor in her eyes. For dress she cared next to nothing, and then, too, she needed no finery, her cousins being absent. She owned a bottle-green habit for her outings on horseback, a serviceable dress of coarse material with a close-fitting jacket adorned with brandebourgs for walking, and a silk robe-de-chambre for house wear. Gothard, her young equerry, a bright, courageous lad of fifteen, served as her escort, for a great part of her time was spent out of doors, and she hunted where she would, all over the Gondreville property, with the entire approval of both Michu and the tenants. Her riding was the admiration of everybody, and she handled her gun with a dexterity bordering on the miraculous. She was universally known to the people of the neighborhood under the sobriquet of "Mademoiselle," even when the Revolution was at its height.

Whoever has read that entertaining romance "Rob Roy" will remember Diana Vernon, one of the few female characters in limning which Sir Walter Scott has laid aside that frosty propriety which characterizes most of his writings. This reference will enable you better to understand Laurence, if you will but add to the qualities of the Caledonian huntress the contained exaltation of Charlotte Corday, and subtract from them the agreeable vivacity which makes Lady Di so attractive. The young Comtesse had stood beside her mother's deathbed, had witnessed the slaughter of the Abbé d'Hauterres, had seen the Marquis and Mar-

quise de Simeuse perish on the scaffold; her only brother had died of his wounds, she might at any moment hear of the death of her two cousins who were serving in Condé's army, and, to cap the climax, the fortune of the Cinq-Cygnes and the Simeuses had been devoured by the Republic, without advantage to the Republic. So it is not to be wondered at that she was grave, or that her gravity approached stupidity.

M. d'Hauteserre, moreover, showed himself the shrewdest and most upright of guardians. Under his rule Cinq-Cygne resembled an extensive farm. The good man, who reminded one more of a close-fisted landlord than of a gay knight out of the books of chivalry, had turned to account the park and gardens, some two hundred acres in extent, which he made to yield provender for the cattle, food for the men and women, and wood for firing. By dint of the strictest economy, and as a result of judicious investments in the debt of the State, when the Comtesse attained her majority she had quite a respectable fortune. In 1798 the heiress's income consisted of twenty thousand francs of rente on the grand-livre—payment of which, it is true, was irregular and sadly in arrear—and twelve thousand francs derived from the Cinq-Cygne property, the rents of which had been notably advanced as the leases fell in. M. and Mme. d'Hauteserre had retired to the country, where they supported themselves on an annuity of three thousand francs in the tontines Lafarge—the impairment of their fortune would not permit of their living anywhere but at Cinq-Cygne—and Laurence's first act of authority had been to assign to them the use for life of the pavilion which they occupied in the chateau. The d'Hauteserres, whose penuriousness extended to the affairs of their ward no less than to their own, and who put by regularly, year by year, their thousand crowns as a nest-egg for their two sons, skimmed the heiress's table in every way they could think of. The total expenditure at Cinq-Cygne was less than five thousand francs a year. But Laurence, who did not trouble herself

with details, found everything as it should be. The guardian and his wife, unconsciously dominated by the imperceptible influence of that character which predominated in all matters, small and great, had in the end come to respect and admire her whom they had known as a child—which is not the case in every instance. But in Laurence's manners, in her guttural, masculine voice, in the imperious look of her eye, was that inexplicable power, that indescribable something which always imposes, even when it is more apparent than real, for among the unreflecting emptiness often passes for profundity. Depth is to the vulgar incomprehensible. And that probably is the reason why the people admire what they do not understand.

M. and Mme. d'Hauteserre, impressed by the young Comtesse's habitual silence and the unconventionality of her ways, were constantly on the lookout for something great, something wonderful. By means of an occasional favor judiciously conferred, and by taking care never to allow herself to be overreached, Laurence, despite the fact that she was an aristocrat, had won from the peasantry a large measure of respect. Her sex, her name, her misfortunes, her unusual mode of life, all contributed to increase her authority over the denizens of the valley of Cinq-Cygne. She would go away, accompanied by Gothard, and sometimes be gone a day or two, and never, on her return, would M. or Mme. d'Hauteserre think of inquiring into the motives of her absence. There was nothing abnormal, be it remarked, in Laurence's appearance. The virago in her was concealed under the most feminine form, and apparently the weakest and most helpless. Her heart was tender to excess, but her head was freighted with virile resolution and stoic firmness. Her keen, perspicacious eyes were unacquainted with tears. No one, seeing that delicate white wrist with its tracery of blue veins, would have supposed that the sinews underneath were as capable of managing a restive horse as a practiced driver's. Her hand, so soft and flexible, could load and fire a gun or pistol with the cer-



tainty and rapidity of an old sportsman's. Out of doors her headgear was that with which women usually equip themselves for riding, a fetching little beaver hat and a green veil; and thanks to these devices, and to a black silk handkerchief that she commonly wore loosely knotted about her alabaster neck, she had managed to preserve the freshness of her complexion during the various long expeditions that she was continually making in the open air.

During the Directorate and the early days of the Consulate, Laurence had been able to lead this manner of life without attracting attention or making herself subject of remark; but now that the government was assuming form and shape, the new-fledged authorities, the Prefect of the Aube, Malin's friends, and Malin himself, began to talk of her and inquire into her actions. Laurence's single and only thought was of the overthrow of Bonaparte, whose ambition and triumph had aroused in her a sort of fury, a cold and calculating fury, however. She, the unknown, obscure enemy of the great man, in her secluded forest home in the valley, kept her mind fixed on her object with terrible tenacity of purpose; she had half a mind sometimes to seek him in the green alleys of Malmaison or Saint-Cloud and take his life. The execution of this project would alone have served to account for the habits and exercises of her daily life. Admitted, however, after the rupture of the Peace of Amiens, to the conspiracy inaugurated by those whose object was to hoist the First Consul with the petard of the 18th Brumaire, she had thenceforth subordinated her energies and her hate to the extensive and extremely well-organized plan that was to attack Bonaparte abroad, by the gigantic coalition of Russia, Prussia and Austria, which he, then Emperor, crushed at Austerlitz; and, at home, by a combination of men of the most diametrically opposite views and ways of thinking, but united by community of hatred, many of whom, like Laurence, desired the great man's death and did not recoil at the word assassination. This young girl, then, so fragile and helpless to look upon,



so strong to those who knew her well, was the trustworthy and faithful guide of the gentlemen who crossed the frontier from Germany to take part in this great and, to them, glorious undertaking. Fouché entertained hopes that the Duc d'Enghien, allured by this co-operation of émigrés from beyond the Rhine, might become involved in the conspiracy. The presence of that prince in the territory of Baden, only a short distance from Strasburg, lent color subsequently to those suppositions. Be that as it may, the great question as to whether the Prince was really cognizant of the enterprise, whether he was to cross over into French territory in the event of its terminating successfully, is one of those secrets as to which the Princes of the House of Bourbon have always seen fit to maintain the profoundest silence. As history clarifies with the course of years, impartial historians will admit that, to state the case mildly, it was imprudent in the Prince to be so near the frontier at the very moment appointed for the outbreak of an immense conspiracy, of the existence of which no one will venture to claim that the royal family was ignorant.

We have seen how cautious a man Malin showed himself to be lately in holding his conference with Grévin in the open air. No less was the caution infused by this young woman at this period into all her words and actions. She received emissaries and conferred with them, either at various appointed spots on the edge of the forest of Nodésme, or outside the valley of Cinq-Cygne, between Sézanne and Brienne. Accompanied by Gothard, she often covered fifteen leagues without once getting off her horse, and returned to Cinq-Cygne without her fresh face showing the slightest trace of fatigue or preoccupation. She had in the beginning detected in the eyes of the small cowherd, then nine years old, that artless admiration which children manifest for anything beyond the common; she made him her "tiger," and taught him to groom a horse with the care and thoroughness that are employed in an Englishman's stable. She recognized in him intelligence, a desire to better his condition,

and entire freedom from mercenary motives; she tested his faithfulness, and found that he possessed not only a good share of sound common-sense, but a generous disposition; he was not actuated by self-seeking motives; she cultivated that young, undeveloped nature; she was kind to him, though not unduly familiar; she attached him to her by attaching herself to him, by polishing with her own hand that half-formed, semi-savage character without depriving it of any portion of its simplicity and strength. And when she had made sufficient trial of the, so to speak, canine fidelity that she had fostered, Gothard was promoted to be her ingenious and ingenuous adjutant. The little peasant lad, whom nobody ever thought of suspecting, would sometimes make the trip from Cinq-Cygne to Nancy and back and no one be the wiser. All the dodges and stratagems employed by spies he practiced. The extreme caution that his mistress had inculcated in him had in no way changed his nature. Gothard, endowed with a woman's cunning, a child's candor, and the sleepless vigilance of the conspirator, concealed those admirable qualities under the dumbness and dense ignorance of the denizens of the fields. The little man appeared to be silly, unapt, and clumsy, but once his work was cut out for him he was as agile as a fish, elusive as an eel. Like a dog, he read his master's purpose in his eyes, divined his thoughts intuitively. His red, good-natured, apple-cheeked face, his slumberous brown eyes, his hair cropped peasant fashion, his attire, his stunted growth, gave him the appearance of a ten-year-old boy.

Under the protection of their cousin, who provided for their safety from Strasburg to Bar-sur-Aube, MM. d'Hauteserre and de Simeuse entered France through Alsace and Lorraine in company with several other émigrés, while another detachment of conspirators, equally courageous, effected their entrance by way of the cliffs of Normandy. Dressed as workingmen, the d'Hauteserres and Simeuses had cautiously felt their way from forest to forest, under the guidance of trusty men selected by Laurence in each

department three months before, from among those whose devotion to the Bourbon cause was vouched for and who were least liable to be suspected. The émigrés slept by day and travelled during the night. Each of them was attended by two trustworthy soldiers, of whom one scouted in advance and the other remained behind to guard the rear in the event of an attack. Thanks to these precautions, the little band, object of so many hopes and fears, had reached in safety the forest of Nodsmc, the appointed place of rendezvous. Twenty-seven other gentlemen likewise crossed the frontier at the same time from Switzerland, made their way through Burgundy, and were directed with similar precautions on Paris. M. de Rivière was reckoning on five hundred men, of whom one hundred youths of good family were to officer the battalion. MM. de Polignac and de Rivière, whose conduct as leaders was most remarkable, maintained to the end an impenetrable silence as to the names of these accomplices, whose identity was never fully established. Wherefore it may be said to-day, from what information leaked out during the Restoration, that Bonaparte was no more aware of the extent of the danger that threatened him in those days than England comprehended the magnitude of the peril in which she was placed by the camp of Boulogne; and yet there was never a time when police affairs were managed with more intelligence and address. At the time of the beginning of this narrative, one of those traitors who will invariably be found in conspiracies of which the membership is not confined to a small body of tried and resolute men, an accomplice brought face to face with death, gave information, of no great value, fortunately, as to the extent, but sufficiently precise as to the object of the enterprise. As Malin informed Grévin, the police, desiring to get at all the ramifications of the plot, while keeping the conspirators under surveillance, had not restricted their liberty of action. Nevertheless, the hand of Government was in a manner forced by Georges Cadoudal, a masterful man who, taking counsel



with no one but himself, had thrown himself into Paris with twenty-five Chouans and was awaiting an opportunity to fall on and despatch the First Consul. Hate and love contended for mastery in Laurence's mind. To put Bonaparte out of the way and restore the Bourbons—would not that mean Gondreville regained and a fortune for her cousins? Those two sentiments, of which one is the antithesis of the other, suffice, and particularly at the age of twenty-three, to set in motion all the energies of the soul, all the activities of life. For this reason Laurence, for the last two months, had appeared to the inhabitants of Cinq-Cygne more beautiful than at any previous moment of her life. An unwonted rosy hue dyed her pale cheek, her brow was radiant at times with fond anticipation; but when the "Gazette" was read aloud at evening, setting forth the conciliatory words and actions of the First Consul, she lowered her eyes that no one might read in them the conviction, so pleasing to her soul, that the enemy of the Bourbons was rushing to his doom. No one at the chateau, then, suspected that the young Comtesse had seen her cousins the night before. M. and Mme. d'Hautesserre's two sons had passed the night in the Comtesse's own chamber, under the same roof as their father and mother; for Laurence, to disarm suspicion, after she had dismissed the two d'Hautesserres to bed, between one and two in the morning, went and joined her cousins at the designated place of meeting and conducted them to the middle of the forest, where she had assigned to them as a dwelling place the deserted cabin of a wood-merchant's factotum. Confident that she was to see them again, she manifested no appearance of joy, she betrayed none of the emotions of expectation; in a word, she managed to efface all vestiges of pleasure at sight of them; she was impassive. Pretty Catherine, daughter of the woman who had nursed her, and Gothard, both of whom were in the secret, imitated their mistress in their behavior. Catherine was nineteen years old. A girl of that age, like a boy of Gothard's, is a fanatic in her devotion, and rather than betray a secret will



allow herself to be cut in pieces. And as for Gothard, one whiff of the perfume that the Comtesse was accustomed to put on her clothes would have given him strength to endure the "question extraordinary" without a murmur.

At the moment when Marthe, advised of the imminence of the approaching danger, was gliding, swiftly and noiselessly as a spectre, toward the gap in the fence to which Michu had directed her, the spectacle afforded by the salon of the chateau of Cinq-Cygne was one of security and perfect peace. Its occupants were so far from suspecting the approach of the storm then making ready to burst over them that their attitude must have aroused the pity of any one acquainted with their circumstances. In the wide, deep chimney blazed one of those roaring fires that are seen only in old hospitable chateaux situated on the margin of a wood; over the handsomely carved mantelpiece was an old-fashioned bevelled mirror, and above this again, in a framed panel, a band of jocund shepherdesses in paniers were footing it to the music of the pipes. At the corner of the fireplace, in a great square *bergère* of gilded wood upholstered in magnificent green silk damask, reclined—or rather lay, so complete was her exhaustion—the young Comtesse. Returning only at six o'clock from the confines of la Brie, after riding forward in advance of the band in order to bring the four gentlemen safely into port at their night's resting place, their last before making their entrance into Paris, she had found M. and Mme. d'Hauteserre just finishing dinner. Listening to the urgent demands of appetite, she had sat down to table without taking off her riding-boots and bedraggled habit. After dinner she had felt so tired and done-up from the fatigue and agitation of the day that, instead of going to her room and changing her raiment, she had dropped into the luxurious *bergère* that stood there so invitingly, cradling her pretty head, with its myriad little golden curls, in its soft depths and stretching out her feet before her to the fire. The grateful warmth would dry the mud stains on her boots and habit. Her various belongings, buckskin gloves, little

beaver hat, green veil and crop lay on the console where she had negligently thrown them. Now she glanced up at the old gilt-bronze clock, that occupied a position on the mantel-shelf between a pair of highly ornate candelabra, as if mentally speculating whether her four conspirators were in bed yet; anon she looked over at the whist table that stood before the fire and at which were seated M. d'Hauteserre and his wife and the curé of Cinq-Cygne and his sister.

Even though these persons may not have leading roles to play in the present drama, their portraits will yet possess the merit of depicting one of the aspects presented by the aristocracy after its scourging of 1793. Viewed in this light, a description of the salon of Cinq-Cygne will have the savor of history seen *en déshabillé*.

The *gentilhomme*, at that time fifty-two years old and in robust health, a tall, lean, sanguine man, would have presented an appearance of more manliness had it not been for a pair of big, protuberant, pale-blue eyes, the expression of which indicated extreme simplicity. In his face, which tapered down into a long, sharp, perked-up chin, there was, viewed from an artist's standpoint, a disproportionate interval between the nose and mouth which gave him an appearance of feebleness and indecision that was in entire harmony with his character, and with which all the other details of his countenance were in perfect consonance. Thus his gray hair, plastered down upon his cranium by the pressure of his hat, which he wore at all times and seasons, formed a sort of skull-cap on his head and served to accentuate its ungainly contours. His forehead, seamed and wrinkled by exposure to the weather and continual fretting over trifles, was void of all expression. His aquiline nose did something to redeem his face, but the only indication of forcefulness lay in the thick bushy eyebrows, which had retained their jetty blackness, and in his high color. And this indication did not belie his character; the gentleman, with all his mildness and simplicity, was a life-long believer in Catholic and monarchical principles, and no earthly consideration

could have induced him to forsake his party. The worthy man would have submitted to arrest without the least inclination to harm a hair on the head of the municipals, and would have marched to the scaffold as peaceably as a lamb. His only resource, the life-annuity of three thousand livres, had been an obstacle to his emigrating. He therefore yielded obedience to the existing government, without wavering in his attachment to the royal family or ceasing to pray for their reintegration, but if asked to take part in a rising in favor of the Bourbons he would have given a flat refusal; he could not afford to endanger his temporal interests. He was one of those Royalists who could never forget that they had been plundered and beaten, and who ever after maintained an attitude of sulky silence, brooding over their wrongs, amassing wealth, devoid of energy, but incapable alike of either abjuring their principles or making any sacrifice; ready to throw up their caps and cheer triumphant Royalty, friends of religion and of the priests, but unchangeable in their resolve to endure to the end all the ills of adversity. That is not holding to an opinion, it is simply mulish obstinacy. Action is the essence of party. Destitute of common-sense, but loyal, avaricious as a French peasant, and noble withal in speech and manners, daring in his aspirations, but timid in words and actions, turning everything to advantage, ready to serve as mayor of Cinq-Cygne if called on, M. d'Hauteserre was an admirable exemplar of those honorable gentlemen on whose forehead God has written the word *mîtes*, who allowed the whirlwind of the Revolution to sweep over their heads and homes, who ventured to raise their heads again during the Restoration, enriched by their economies, boasting of their discreet attachment, and who were reinstated in their fields and manors after 1830. His costume depicted the man and the time, for dress is always a faithful exponent of character. M. d'Hauteserre generally wore one of those ample, pale-brown frockcoats with a narrow collar which the last Duc d'Orléans introduced on his return from England. and



which, in the days of the Revolution, were a sort of happy medium between the hideous costume of the populace and the elegant *redingotes* affected by the aristocracy. His gayly striped and flowered velvet waistcoat, the fashion of which reminded one of the corresponding garments worn by Robespierre and Saint-Just, afforded a glimpse of the ruffle of sheerest lawn that edged a narrow-plaited shirt-front. He had not abandoned small-clothes in favor of the more modern *pantalón*, but in his case that indispensable garment was of thick blue cloth and furnished with knee-buckles of burnished steel. His stockings of finest cotton-thread were drawn tight over a pair of well-molded calves and legs straight and sinewy as a deer's. His pedal extremities were incased in heavy shoes, surmounted by gaiters of black cloth. He still adhered to the old-fashioned cambric cravat, wrapped many times around the neck and fastened behind by a gold buckle. In adopting this costume, which partook at the same time somewhat of the nature of the peasant's, the aristocrat's and the revolutionary's, the old gentleman had not intended to practice political eclecticism, he had simply and very innocently yielded to the force of circumstances.

Mme. d'Hauteserre, forty years old and aged by her emotions, had a pale worn face that seemed to be constantly posing for a portrait, and her lace cap, decorated with white satin bows, assisted materially in giving her that solemn and imposing air. She continued to use powder, notwithstanding her white neckerchief and the dove-colored gown with flowing sleeves and ample skirt, the last costume of poor Queen Marie Antoinette. Her face was almost a triangle; she had a sharp chin and a thin, pinched nose; her eyes had known what it was to weep, but she still applied to her cheeks a "suspicion" of the rouge which lent a little brilliancy to those gray orbs. She took snuff, too, and every time she did so gave an exhibition of the pretty little airs and graces in which the female dandies of bygone days were so proficient; the operation as conducted became a



ceremonial, to explain which only a word or two is necessary: she had small and very pretty hands.

Two years previously the former tutor of the Simeuse twins, a Minorite priest and friend of the Abbé d'Hauteserre, named Goujet, had accepted the incumbency of Cinq-Cygne out of regard for the d'Hauteserres and the young Comtesse. Mlle. Goujet, his sister, rejoicing in an income of seven hundred francs a year, appropriated her money to eking out her brother's diminutive salary and kept his house for him. The church and parsonage had been left unsold by the nation, for the reason that they were not worth the trouble. Abbé Goujet and the people at the chateau were near neighbors, for the curé's garden and the park were contiguous in places. Twice a week, therefore, Abbé Goujet and his sister dined at Cinq-Cygne, whither they resorted every evening of their lives to make up the d'Hauteserres' game of whist or boston. As for Laurence, she did not know one card from another.

Abbé Goujet, an old white-haired man with a face as colorless as an old woman's, gifted by nature with an attractive smile and a pleasant, insinuating voice, had a rather insipid, inane countenance, the effect of which was mitigated by a forehead indicative of great intelligence and a pair of very shrewd, bright eyes. Of medium height and endowed with a good figure, he retained the black frockcoat *à la française*, wore silver buckles at the knee of his small-clothes and on his shoes, black silk stockings, and a black waistcoat, over the front of which floated the ends of his white band; all which gave him something of a *grand seigneur* air without at all detracting from his dignity. The Abbé, who became Bishop of Troyes at the Restoration, and whom his previous occupation had taught to judge young people pretty accurately, had divined Laurence's grand character; he appreciated her at her full worth, and had from the very first testified for the young girl a respectful deference which contributed in no small degree to the subsequent condition of affairs at Cinq-Cygne, where we have

seen her lording it over the austere matron and good-natured gentleman to whom, in accordance with every precept and custom of the time, she should have rendered dutiful obedience. For six months Abbé Goujet had been observing Laurence with the attentiveness peculiar to priests; who are endowed with greater perspicacity than most folk; and although he had no idea that the girl of twenty-three whom he saw idly twisting a loose button of her habit between her feeble fingers was planning the downfall of Bonaparte, he nevertheless suspected that some scheme of more than usual magnitude was working in that busy brain.

Mlle. Goujet's portrait may be drawn in a very few words that will produce her before the mental vision of the least imaginative reader. She belonged to the genus gawk. She knew that she was not handsome, and was the first one to laugh at her homeliness, exposing in the process her long tusks yellow as her complexion or her bony hands. She was inherently of a cheerful and kindly disposition. She wore the famous but now antiquated *casquin*, a voluminous skirt with capacious pockets always full of jingling keys, a cap bedecked with many ribbons, and false hair. She had been forty years old at a very early period, but had made up for it, she asserted, by remaining stationary for the last twenty years. She venerated the nobility, but knew how to preserve her own dignity while according to the great all the respect and homage that was their due.

The arrival of these persons at Cinq-Cygne had been most opportune for Mme. d'Hauteserre, who had not, like her husband, rural occupations to divert her, or, like Laurence, the distraction of an overmastering hatred to help her endure the tedium of a solitary life. But during the last six years things had improved considerably. The re-establishment of the Catholic religion, for one thing, allowed of her attending once more to her spiritual duties, which are taken more seriously in the country than elsewhere. M. and Mme. d'Hauteserre, reassured by the conservative policy adopted by the First Consul, had been

enabled to correspond with their sons, to hear how they were and what they were doing; the old people's fears had been in a measure laid at rest, and they had written imploring the boys to petition that their names might be stricken off the lists and that they might be permitted to return to France. The Treasury had paid up the arrears of interest that was owing, and payments were now made regularly at the end of every quarter. The d'Hauteserres had an income, in addition to their annuity, of eight thousand francs. The old gentleman took not a little credit to himself for his foresight. He had invested all his savings—some twenty thousand francs—together with his ward's, previous to the 18th Brumaire, which, as everybody knows, sent the Funds jumping from twelve to eighteen francs.

Cinq-Cygne had long lain naked, waste and empty. The prudent guardian had purposely refrained from making any changes during the troublous times of the Revolution, but on the conclusion of the Peace of Amiens he had made a journey to Troyes, and finding in the shops of the second-hand dealers some of the débris of the two plundered hotels had brought it back with him. It was in this manner, thanks to his kindness, that the salon came to be refurnished. Handsome curtains of white damask, embroidered with green flowers, that had originally done duty in the Hotel Simeuse now draped the six windows of the salon in which were seated some of our *dramatis personæ*. The walls of the spacious apartment were covered with oak wainscoting divided off in panels set in a framework of beaded molding, with grotesque masks as decorations at the corners, and painted in two shades of gray. The spaces over the four doors were occupied by figure pieces in *grisaille*, in the style of those which found such favor in the time of Louis XV. In the course of his rummaging in Troyes the old gentleman had come across gilded consoles, a sofa and some chairs in green damask, a crystal chandelier, a marquetry card-table—ever so many things that would help to restore the glories of Cinq-Cygne. In 1792 all the



furniture of the chateau had been taken and carted away, for the plunderers of the town mansions had their imitators in the valley. Every time the old man's business called him to Troyes he returned with some relic of former splendor, it might be a handsome carpet like that which was laid on the floor of the salon, it might be a bit of plate or some pieces of old porcelain of Saxe and Sèvres. Six months previously he had mustered up courage to disinter the family silver, which the cook had buried in the cellar of a small house that he owned in a distant faubourg of Troyes.

This faithful servitor and his wife, named Durieu, had long followed the fortunes of their young mistress. Durieu was factotum in the chateau, as his wife was housekeeper. Durieu had as his assistant Catherine's sister, whom he was instructing in his art and who subsequently developed into an excellent cook. An aged gardener, his wife, their son who worked for a daily wage, and their daughter who tended the cows, completed the personnel of the chateau. A few months previously Durieu's wife had secretly had two suits of livery made in the Cinq-Cygne colors, one for Gothard and one for the gardener's son. Although soundly rated by the old gentleman for this piece of foolhardiness, when Saint-Laurent's day came round, the day of Laurence's fête, she could not deny herself the pleasure of serving dinner with something approaching old-time splendor. To M. and Mme. d'Hauteserre and the Durieus this slow and laborious progression toward the old order of things was a source of unmixed pleasure. Laurence, however, smiled disdainfully and declared that it was all childishness. But in these lighter occupations the worthy d'Hauteserre was not oblivious of more important matters; he repaired buildings, rebuilt walls, planted wherever there was soil for a tree to take root, and made every inch of ground productive. For which reason the valley of Cinq-Cygne soon came to look on him as an oracle in matters agricultural. He reclaimed a hundred acres of land that was in litigation but had not been sold, and which the commune had taken



possession of and added to its common lands; he converted the tract into artificial meadows on which he pastured the cattle of the chateau, and set out along the boundaries a fringe of poplars which, in the course of six years, had grown to be goodly trees. He was thinking of purchasing or leasing additional land and establishing still another farm, to be operated by himself, which would enable him to utilize all the buildings of the chateau.

For a couple of years past, therefore, life at Cinq-Cygne had been quite endurable. M. d'Hauteserre turned out at sunrise and was off to the fields to superintend operations, for he kept his men occupied in all weathers. He returned to breakfast, after which he got on one of the farm horses and made his rounds like an ordinary overseer; then, returning in time for dinner, he completed his day with a few games of boston. All the inhabitants of the chateau had their duly allotted occupations; the day was parcelled out with the mathematical precision of a convent. Laurence alone brought an element of disorder into this peaceful and systematic life, by her sudden journeys, her absences, her wild-goose chases, as Madame d'Hauteserre called them. None the less, there were two divergent policies in existence at Cinq-Cygne and causes of dissension. First, Durieu and his wife were jealous of Gothard and Catherine, because of the greater intimacy with which the latter were treated by their young mistress, the idol of the household. In the next place, the d'Hauteserres, with the concurrence and support of Mlle. Goujet and the curé, insisted that their sons, no less than the Simeuse twins, instead of leading a life of danger and privation in foreign parts, should be permitted to return and enjoy the peace and plenty of those halcyon days. Laurence, representing as she did Royalism, Royalism pure, militant and uncompromising, scouted this unworthy proposition. The four old people, who had no desire to see a happy existence imperilled, or that little strip of solid ground which had been regained from the seething waters

of the revolutionary flood washed from under their feet, endeavored to convert Laurence to their more moderate ways of thinking, for they saw that it was she who was chiefly responsible for the flat refusal which the young d'Hauteresses and de Simeuses returned to all overtures from home looking to a return to France. Their ward's superb disdain scared those poor folk almost out of their wits, and they were not far out of the way in apprehending what they called "some foolish, hare-brained action." This dissension had broken out about the time of the explosion of the infernal machine in the Rue Saint-Nicaise, the first Royalist attempt against the victor of Marengo after his refusal to treat with the House of Bourbon. The d'Hauteresses, believing that the Republicans were the instigators of the attempt, were inclined to rejoice over Bonaparte's escape, but Laurence wept tears of rage. In her despair she lost sight of her habitual dissimulation; she heaped reproaches on God for abandoning the son of St. Louis.

"Had it been I," she cried, "I should not have allowed it to be a failure! Is it not true," said she to Abbé Goujet, observing the utter stupefaction depicted on everybody's face, "that we are justified in combating usurpation with every weapon within our reach?"

"My daughter," the Abbé replied, "the Church has frequently been assailed and severely censured by the philosophers for having in the past asserted that it was lawful to use against the usurper the weapons employed by the usurper to accomplish indefensible and unchristian ends; but, as things are to-day, the Church owes too much to the First Consul not to protect him and do all she can to shield him from the consequences of that dictum which, it must not be forgotten, moreover, was the utterance of Jesuits."

"Then the Church forsakes us!" she gloomily rejoined.

After this little tilt, whenever the four elders broached the subject of submitting to the decrees of Providence, the young Comtesse would leave the salon. For some time past the curé, wiser in his generation than the guardian,

had given up discussing abstract principles and taken instead to expatiating on the material advantages of the consular government, not so much with the idea of converting the Comtesse as to see if he might not gather from the expression of her face and eyes some clew that would enlighten him as to her projects. Gothard's absences, Laurence's frequent excursions and her preoccupation, which in these latter days was apparent to every one, a multitude of little things that it was impossible should escape notice in the silence and tranquillity of the life led at Cinq-Cygne, especially to eyes as anxiously observant as those of the d'Hauteserres, the Durieus and Abbé Goujet—all had contributed to arouse the apprehensions of those faint-hearted Royalists. But as day after day went by and nothing unusual happened, as the political firmament seemed to afford no presage of foul weather, life at the chateau had settled down once more into its accustomed placid routine. Everybody attributed the Comtesse's outings to her passion for the chase.

The reader can imagine the profound silence which, at nine o'clock, filled the park, the woods, the courts and all the country round about Cinq-Cygne, where at that hour persons and things were so harmoniously blended in the mellow moonlight, where reigned the deepest peace, whither plenty had returned, where the kindly and well-meaning gentleman was relying on a continuance of prosperity to convert his ward to his system of obedience. Our Royalist friends were greatly addicted to the game of boston, which, under a guise of innocent levity, disseminated throughout France notions of liberty; it was invented in commemoration of the rebellious Americans, and all its terms serve to remind one of the struggle that had the encouragement and assistance of Louis XVI. The players, while making their "misères" and "indépendances," were observing Laurence, who, overcome by slumber, presently dropped off asleep with a smile of irony on her lips: her last waking thought had been of the tranquil picture presented by the table and its four occupants, into whose midst two little words,



informing the d'Hauteserres that their sons had slept beneath their roof the previous night, would have fallen like a bombshell, scattering terror and consternation. What young girl of twenty-three would not, like Laurence, have felt elated by the consciousness that she was playing the role of Destiny, and would not, like her, have been moved by a feeling of compassion for those whom she saw struggling at such an immeasurable distance beneath her?

"She is asleep," said the abbé. "I never saw her so overcome by fatigue."

"Durieu told me that her mare came in about done up," remarked Mme. d'Hauteserre. "She had not used her fowling-piece, the lock was as clean as a whistle; that shows that she was not shooting to-day."

"Ah, *sac-à-papier*! that doesn't count for anything," replied the curé.

"Bah!" Mlle. Goujet exclaimed, "didn't I do the very same thing when I was twenty-three and saw myself condemned to a life of single blessedness, go chasing about the country, trying to tire myself out? I can understand why it is that the Comtesse scours the fields and woods the way she does, and never thinks of knocking over a partridge or a rabbit. It's going on a dozen years since she has seen the cousins she loves. Well, now, I'll tell you what it is; if I were in her place, if I were young, rich and pretty, I'd be in Germany before you could say Jack Robinson! Poor dear, I've no doubt she feels something drawing her toward the frontier."

"You allow your imagination to run away with you, Mademoiselle Goujet," said the curé with a smile.

"I saw you greatly exercised by the sayings and doings of a twenty-three-year-old girl," she rejoined, "and I thought I would try to explain matters to you; that's all."

"Her cousins will return, she will be rich; she will settle down when she has had her fling," M. d'Hauteserre observed.

"God grant she may!" the old lady fervently ejaculated,



producing her gold snuff-box, which had begun to revisit the daylight in those recent days.

"I have some news for you," said the old gentleman to the curé. "Malin came down from Paris last night and is at Gondreville."

"Malin?" Laurence exclaimed, aroused, notwithstanding the soundness of her slumber, by the name.

"Yes," replied the curé, "but he leaves again this evening, and everybody is wondering what may be the meaning of his hurried visit."

"That man," said Laurence, "is the evil genius of both our houses."

The young Comtesse had been dreaming of her cousins and the d'Hauteserre youths; danger had seemed to be impending over them. Her handsome eyes lost their sparkle and became fixed and dull as she thought of the perils that were awaiting them at Paris. She rose abruptly and, without saying more, ascended to her room. She occupied the chamber of honor, opening out of which and situated in the turret which faced the forest were a study and an oratory. After she had left the drawing-room the dogs barked loudly, the bell of the postern gate was heard to ring, and Durieu appeared at the door of the salon with a frightened face.

"The mayor is here!" said he. "Something new has happened."

The mayor, at one time a piqueur in the service of the Simeuse family, sometimes visited the chateau, where, from motives of policy, the d'Hauteserres received him with a politeness which pleased the official mightily. This man, Goulard by name, had married a wealthy woman in business at Troyes; her property was situated in the commune of Cinq-Cygne, and he had added to it the broad lands of a rich abbey, to the purchase of which he devoted all his savings. The spacious abbey of Val-des-Preux, a quarter of a league distant from the chateau, was a residence scarcely inferior in magnificence to Gondreville, in which the mayor

and his wife cut much the same figure as would two old rats in a cathedral.

"Goulard, you are *goulu* (gluttonous)!" was Laurence's jocular salutation the first time she saw him at Cinq-Cygne.

Although he was a red-hot revolutionist and not regarded with much favor by the Comtesse, the mayor had never been able entirely to divest himself of the respect which he had so long entertained for the Cinq-Cygnés and the Simeuses. Accordingly he "shut his eyes" to all that happened at the chateau. He called it shutting his eyes when he failed to see the portraits of Louis XVI., Marie-Antoinette, the royal children, Monsieur, the Comte d'Artois, Cazalès and Charlotte Corday that occupied the panels of the salon; when he sat by unmoved and uttered no word of protest when his entertainers, under his very nose, proposed and drank the toast "Perdition to the Republic!" or spoke in irreverent, unseemly terms of the five Directors and other political bigwigs of the time. The position of this man, who, like many another parvenu, once he had made his fortune was less antagonistic than he had been to the great families and quite willing to be connected with them, had been utilized by the two individuals whose calling Michu had divined so promptly, and who, before taking themselves off to Gondreville, had thoroughly reconnoitred the country.

The man who "represented the best traditions of the old police" and Corentin, phenix of detectives, had a secret mission. Malin had not erred when he assigned a double role to those two consummate artists in tragic farce; but perhaps it will be best, before giving the reader an opportunity to see them at work, to depict for him the head to which they served as arms. Bonaparte, when he became First Consul, found Fouché at the head of the general police. The Revolution, for good and sufficient reasons, had frankly erected the police into a special ministry. On his return from Marengo, however, Bonaparte created the office of Prefect of Police, installed Dubois in it, and called Fouché to the Council of State, appointing as his successor

in the ministry of police the conventionnel Cochon, subsequently better known as Comte Lapparent. Fouché, who regarded the police as the most important of all the departments in a government of broad views and settled policy, saw in this change a disgrace, or at all events an intimation that his master did not trust him. Subsequently to the incidents of the infernal machine and the conspiracy referred to in this history, Napoleon, recognizing the incontestable superiority of this great statesman, replaced him in office as head of the police. At a later day, however, the Emperor, taking alarm at the aptitude which Fouché displayed during his absence at the time of the Walcheren affair, conferred this position on the Duc de Rovigo, and dismissed the Duc d'Otrante into what was neither more nor less than exile as governor of the Illyrian provinces.

The phenomenal genius which inspired in Napoleon something almost approaching terror did not declare itself immediately. The obscure conventionnel, one of the most extraordinary and most misjudged men of his time, received his education amid storms and tempests. He rose during the Directorate to the height whence men of genius are enabled to scan the future by reading the book of the past; then all at once, like certain actors unknown to fame who suddenly achieve celebrity as the result of some happy inspiration, he gave proofs of his immense dexterity during the meteoric revolution of 18th Brumaire. That pale-faced man, reared amid monastic dissimulation, who possessed the secrets of the Montagnards, to whom he belonged originally, and those of the Royalists, with whom he was affiliated in the end, had quietly devoted himself to the study of men, events, the conflicting passions and interests of the political stage; he wormed himself into Bonaparte's secrets, gave him valuable information and useful advice. Content with having demonstrated his aptitude and his usefulness, Fouché had no intention of showing all his hand, he wished to remain at the head of affairs; but Napoleon's vacillating conduct toward him restored to him his political freedom. The



ingratitude, or rather the lack of confidence, shown by the Emperor after the Walcheren business will help to explain the motives and character of the man, who, unfortunately for himself, was not of noble birth, and who followed the political lead of his friend Prince Talleyrand. At the present juncture none of his colleagues, old or new, suspected the amplitude of his genius, which was purely ministerial, essentially governmental, infallible in all its previsions, and of an almost preternatural sagacity. At the present day, surely, all impartial historians will admit that prominent among the numerous causes which led to Napoleon's downfall—a downfall by which he cruelly expiated his many crimes and blunders—was his overweening vanity. There existed in that distrustful sovereign a jealousy of his newly acquired power which tended to influence his conduct and warp his judgment in much the same way as did his secret animosity toward the able men, a precious legacy bequeathed to him by the Revolution, from whom he might, if he would, have constituted for himself a cabinet that should be the depositary of his inmost thoughts. Talleyrand and Fouché were not the only ones at whom he took umbrage. The bane of the usurper is that he has for enemies not those alone whom he despoiled of the crown, but those who assisted him to win it. Napoleon never succeeded in obtaining a sincere acknowledgment of his sovereignty from those who had been his equals and superiors, any more than he did from those who took and maintained their stand on principles of legality; no one therefore considered himself bound by the oaths that he had taken. Malin, a mediocre man, without discernment either to appreciate Fouché's secretive genius or to mistrust the perceptive powers of that keen, all-seeing eye, singed his wings, as the moth does in the candle, by approaching him with a confidential request that detectives be sent to Gondreville; where, he averred, he hoped to obtain further information in regard to the conspiracy. Fouché, without alarming his friend by subjecting him to a lengthy interrogatory, asked



himself why it was that Malin selected Gondreville as the place for carrying on his investigations, and why, if he had any information to impart, he could not communicate it then and there. The ex-Oratorian, whose daily diet had been dissimulation, and who knew something of the double role played by many of the conventionnels, said to himself:

"By what means can Malin know something, whereas we as yet know scarcely anything?"

tc Fouché, therefore, concluded that there was something  
2, in the matter that did not appear upon the surface, a plot  
en within a plot, perhaps, and refrained from mentioning the  
matter to the First Consul. He preferred to make Malin  
his tool rather than destroy him. It was Fouché's way to  
reserve for his own use a large part of the secrets that he  
unearthed, and the power that by these practices he often  
acquired over men and women frequently surpassed Bona-  
parte's. This duplicity was one of Napoleon's principal  
causes of complaint against his minister. Fouché knew the  
doubtful methods by which Malin had acquired his estate  
of Gondreville, and which obliged him to keep close watch  
on the MM. de Simeuse. The Simeuses were serving in  
Condé's army, Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne was their cousin; it was  
not at all improbable, therefore, that they were somewhere  
in the neighborhood and interested in the enterprise, and  
their participation would implicate in the conspiracy the  
House of Condé, to which they were devoted. M. de  
Talleyrand and Fouché had it very much at heart to let a  
little light in upon this particularly obscure corner of the  
conspiracy of 1803. These various considerations were mas-  
tered by Fouché rapidly and with lucidity. Between Malin,  
Talleyrand and him, however, there existed relations which  
obliged him to use the greatest circumspection, and made it  
desirable that they should be perfectly acquainted with the  
interior of the chateau of Gondreville. Corentin was un-  
reservedly attached to Fouché, in the same manner as was  
M. de la Besnardière to the Prince de Talleyrand, Gentz  
to M. de Metternich, Dundas to Pitt, Duroc to Napoleon,

Chavigny to Cardinal Richelieu. Corentin was not the minister's counsellor, but his "damned soul," his scape-goat, tool and familiar, the secret Tristan of that Louis the Eleventh in miniature; wherefore Fouché had naturally retained him in the ministry of police, to the end that he might have an eye and an arm there. It was said that the young man and Fouché were related, that there existed between them one of those ties which are not published to the world; for the latter always recompensed his protégé with more than usual munificence whenever he employed his services. Corentin had contracted a friendship with Peyrade, the quandom disciple of the last lieutenant of police; nevertheless, there were things that he did not reveal to Peyrade. Corentin received from Fouché orders to explore the chateau of Gondreville from top to bottom, to engrave the plan of it on his memory, and to overlook no hole or corner that might serve as a hiding-place for anything bigger than a mouse.

"For we may find it necessary to go back there," said the ex-minister, in the self-same words that Napoleon used in instructing his engineer officers to make a careful reconnoissance of the battlefield of Austerlitz, whither he thought of retreating.

Corentin was also to acquaint himself with Malin's pursuits and conduct, ascertain what influence he exerted in the district, and observe what manner of men he employed to work for him. Fouché had a conviction amounting to a certainty that the Simeuses were in the neighborhood. By a little adroit shadowing of those two officers, such favorites of the Prince of Condé, Peyrade and Corentin might obtain information of the utmost value as to the ramifications of the conspiracy beyond the Rhine. In any event, Corentin had the authority, as well as the men and money, necessary to invest Cinq-Cygne and fill the country with police spies from the forest of Nodésme to Paris. Fouché enjoined the greatest circumspection, and only authorized a domiciliary visit to Cinq-Cygne in the event of positive information

being given by Malin. As a final precaution, he gave Corentin a detailed description of the inexplicable personality of the man Michu, who had been three years under surveillance. Corentin's thought was that of his chief.

"Malin is privy to the conspiracy!—But who knows," said he to himself, "whether Fouché himself is not mixed up with it?"

Corentin, starting for Troyes before Malin, had had an understanding with the officer in command of the gendarmerie, had selected from their number the men of most intelligence, and given them as leader a capable, resourceful man, a captain in the force. Corentin indicated to this captain as their place of rendezvous the chateau of Gondreville, at the same time instructing him to send out under cover of night to four distinct points in the valley of Cinq-Cygne, sufficiently distant from one another not to cause alarm, a picket of twelve men. These four pickets were to describe a quadrilateral and gradually close in upon the chateau of Cinq-Cygne. By leaving Corentin in possession at Gondreville while holding his conference with Grévin, Malin had afforded the detective an opportunity of accomplishing a portion of his mission. On his return from the park the Councillor of State had assured Corentin so positively that the Simeuses and d'Hauteserres were in the neighborhood that the two agents at once sent off the captain on the trail, who, luckily for the four gentlemen, crossed the park with his men by way of the avenue while Michu was having his drinking bout with the spy Violette. The Councillor of State had begun by describing to Peyrade and Corentin the ambush from which he had recently escaped. The two Parisians thereon related to him the episode of the rifle, and Grévin sent Violette to gather tidings of what was going on at the pavilion. Corentin, as a measure of precaution, requested the notary to take his friend the Councillor of State home with him to Arcis and give him a bed. So, while Michu was rushing through the forest, making for Cinq-Cygne with all the speed he was



capable of, Peyrade and Corentin set out from Gondreville in a ramshackle old wicker-work cabriolet drawn by a single post-horse that was driven by the corporal from Arcis, one of the shrewdest men of the legion, and whom they had chosen on the recommendation of the commandant at Troyes.

"If we want to capture the whole outfit, our best way will be to give them a word of warning," said Peyrade to Corentin. "They will be demoralized, and while they are gathering up their papers and preparing for flight we will fall on them with the swiftness of lightning. The cordon of gendarmes, closing in on the chateau, will operate like a drag-net. Not a soul will escape us."

"You might send the mayor to them," the corporal suggested. "He is an obliging, good-natured fellow and wishes them no harm; they won't suspect him."

Goulard was making ready to go to bed when Corentin, who had left the cabriolet standing in a little grove of trees, appeared and informed him confidentially that he would shortly receive a visit from an agent of Government whose object was to invoke his assistance (in his official capacity, of course) in surrounding the chateau of Cinq-Cygne and arresting MM. d'Hauteserre and de Simeuse; and further, that the agent's instructions were, in case the gentlemen had disappeared, to ascertain if they had slept there the night before, to search Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne's drawers and cupboards, and possibly take into custody all the inmates of the chateau, servants as well as masters.

"Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne," Corentin concluded by saying, "doubtless has the protection of persons high in authority, for I have secret orders to forewarn her of this visit and, while not compromising myself, do everything to save her. Once on the ground, however, I shall be powerless to act; I am not alone. You understand me; hasten to the chateau."

This visit of the mayor at that hour of the evening surprised the card-players the more that Goulard was evidently very ill at ease.

"Where is the Comtesse?" he asked.



"She is making ready for bed," replied Mme. d'Hauteserre.

The mayor appeared incredulous; he turned a listening ear to hear what was going on upstairs.

"What ails you to-night, Goulard?" inquired Mme. d'Hauteserre.

To say that Goulard was amazed, dumfounded, as he surveyed those faces so full of childlike candor, so innocent of guile, is to state the case very mildly. At sight of the innocuous and soporific game of boston, so rudely interrupted, the suspicions of the Parisian police appeared to him inexplicable. At that moment Laurence, kneeling in her oratory, was praying fervently for the success of the conspiracy. She entreated God to give His aid and succor to the murderers of Bonaparte, she besought Him earnestly to crush that man of wrath! That virgin soul, so pure and noble, was animated by the fanaticism of a Harmodius, a Judith, a Jacques Clément, an Ankaströen, a Charlotte Corday, a Limoëlan. Catherine was preparing the bed, Gothard was drawing in the blinds, so that when Marthe Michu came under Laurence's window and dashed a handful of gravel against the pane, her presence was known immediately.

"Mademoiselle, there is something up," Gothard announced as he caught sight of the intruder.

"Sh!" said Marthe below her breath; "come down and speak with me."

Gothard was in the garden in less time than it would take a bird to hop from a bough to the ground.

"A moment more and the chateau will be surrounded by the gendarmerie. There is no time to lose," said she to Gothard. "Saddle mademoiselle's horse silently and quickly, and bring him around to the gap in the fence that you know of, between the tower and the stables."

Marthe gave a start on seeing Laurence standing at two paces' distance. The Comtesse had followed in Gothard's footsteps.

"What is it?" Laurence asked, without appearance of emotion.

"The conspiracy against the First Consul is discovered," Marthe replied, speaking in the young Comtesse's ear. "My husband, who would save your cousins' lives if it be possible, sent me to ask you to come and confer with him."

Laurence recoiled three steps and looked hard at Marthe.

"Who are you?" she asked.

"Marthe Michu."

"I do not know that you and I have anything in common," Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne freezingly replied.

"Very well, their blood will be on your head! Come, in the name of the Simeuses, come!" begged Marthe, dropping on her knees and holding up her clasped hands to Laurence. "Are there no papers here, nothing that may compromise you? The gendarmes are at hand; it is but a moment since my husband detected the glint of their bayonets, the shimmer of the moonlight on their laced hats."

Gothard had first climbed up into the haymow, whence he perceived in the distance the silver embroideries of the gendarmes and heard the tramp of their steeds amid the stillness that lay upon the fields; he slipped down into the stable and saddled his mistress's horse, whose feet Catherine, on an intimation from him, swathed in linen rags.

"Where am I to go?" Laurence asked Marthe, whose voice and look impressed the Comtesse by their accent of genuine sincerity.

"To the gap in the fence," she replied, dragging Laurence along with her in that direction. "My noble husband is there. You shall learn the true value of a Judas!"

Catherine came running into the salon, grasped her mistress's gloves, hat, veil and riding-whip, and ran out again. The girl's sudden appearance and the strangeness of her behavior were such a speaking commentary on the mayor's words that Mme. d'Hauteserre and Abbé Goujet exchanged a look by which they communicated to each other this dreadful thought—

"Farewell to all our happiness! Laurence is conspiring, she has compassed the ruin of her cousins and the two d'Hauteserres."

"What do you mean?" asked M. d'Hauteserre, turning to Goulard.

"The chateau is surrounded, you will be subjected to a domiciliary visit. If your sons are here it is time you were looking to their safety, as well as to that of the MM. de Simeuse."

"My sons!" cried Mme. d'Hauteserre in accents of horror.

"We have seen no one," said M. d'Hauteserre.

"So much the better," replied Goulard. "I think too much of the Cinq-Cygne and de Simeuse families to wish to see any evil happen them. Listen, if you have any compromising papers—"

"Papers?" echoed the old gentleman.

"Yes; if you have any such, burn them," returned the mayor; "I will keep the agents occupied meanwhile."

Thereon Master Goulard, who had a mind to carry water on both shoulders, to be friendly with both Republicans and Royalists, left the room and the dogs set up a furious barking.

"You are too late, here they come," said the curé. "But who is going to notify the Comtesse? Where is she?"

"Catherine did not come and carry off her hat, gloves and riding-whip with the intention of converting them into relics," said Mlle. Goujet.

Goulard would have detained the two agents for a while by assuring them of the perfect ignorance of all the inmates of Cinq-Cygne.

"You don't know those people," replied Peyrade, and laughed in the mayor's face.

And the two men, concealing their fell purpose under an appearance of smirking civility, pushed their way in, followed by the corporal from Arcis and one gendarme. The sight of them froze the blood in the veins of the four peace-



able card-players, who did not attempt to stir from their places, overawed by such a display of force. Outside upon the lawn confused sounds were heard indicating the presence there of a small detachment of gendarmes whose horses stamped and pawed the ground.

"Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne seems to be the only one missing here," said Corentin.

"She is in her room, sound asleep, no doubt, by this time," replied M. d'Hauteserre.

"Come with me, ladies," said Corentin, passing rapidly out into the antechamber and from there to the stairs, with Mme. d'Hauteserre and Mlle. Goujet following at his heels. "Rely on me!" he continued in a whisper, speaking in the old lady's ear; "I am your friend; it was I who sent the mayor to you. Distrust my colleague, confide in me. I will save you all!"

"What is it all about?" asked Mlle. Goujet.

"It is a matter of life and death! Didn't you know that?" Corentin replied.

Mme. d'Hauteserre fainted. Greatly to the surprise of Mlle. Goujet, and much to the disappointment of Corentin, Laurence's apartment was empty. Knowing that any one escaping from the chateau or the park into the valley, of which all the outlets were guarded, must certainly be captured, Corentin stationed a gendarme in every room, gave orders for a thorough search of the stables and outbuildings, and descended again to the salon, where he found Durieu, his wife, and all the servants huddled together in panic consternation. Peyrade cast his little keen blue eyes over them, taking mental notes of all the faces; he preserved his cold, calm impassibility in the midst of the disorder. When Corentin reappeared alone, for Mlle. Goujet was caring for Mme. d'Hauteserre, the sound was heard of horses' hoof-beats, mingled with the lamentations of a child. The horses entered the court through the small gate, and presently, in the midst of the general anxiety, a corporal presented himself, pushing before him Gothard, whose



hands were tied behind his back, and Catherine, until the trio reached the spot where the agents were standing.

"Prisoners, Messieurs," said he. "This little rascal was on a horse and tried his best to get away."

"You great ass!" Corentin growled in the ear of the dumfounded corporal; "why couldn't you have let them go? We might have learned something by following them."

Gothard had assumed the role of a great lubberly boy, bursting into tears and boohooing idiotically. Catherine had preserved an attitude of artless innocence which gave the old agent food for reflection. The ex-disciple of Lenoir, after a comparison of the two young people, after a brief but searching observation of the old gentleman whose simple, silly air he took for deepest cunning, of the keen-faced curé toying unconcernedly with the ivory "chips," of the Durieus and the pack of terror-stricken servants, came up to Corentin and whispered in his ear:

"They are no greenhorns whom we have to deal with this time!"

Corentin answered by giving him a look and pointing at the card-table, then added:

"They were playing boston! The mistress of the house took to flight while the servants were making up her bed. We dropped in on them unexpectedly, now we will put them in a place of safety."

A gap, like most other things, has its causes and its effects. Here are the causes to which the gap, which may still be seen between the stables and the tower known as "Mademoiselle's Tower," owed its existence. There was a long ravine that served to carry the surplus water of the forest down into the moat; this ravine old d'Hauteserre, at an early period in his administration of Cinq-Cygne, converted into a road lying between two great tracts of wild land belonging to the property, chiefly with the object of having a place in which to plant a hundred or so young walnut trees that he came across in one of the nurseries.

These trees, in the course of eleven years, had attained considerable size, forming almost a complete arch over the road that lay sunk between banks six feet in height, and by which one reached a small piece of woodland, a recent acquisition, some thirty acres in extent. When the chateau was inhabited, its inmates, when they wished to reach the communal road that skirted the park walls and conducted to the farm, naturally chose the route of the moat in preference to passing out at the gate and so around, which entailed a much longer journey. The trampling of many feet had imperceptibly enlarged the breach on either side, and that with the less scruple that in the nineteenth century moats are not particularly useful objects, and the guardian had been frequently heard to express his intention of filling up the one on his property. The miniature landslides of the earth, stones and gravel dislodged by this constant attrition had rolled down the bank into the water and, settling to the bottom; in course of time had formed a sort of causeway which, at most times raised slightly above the water's level, was only submerged in unusually rainy seasons. Still, notwithstanding these erosions, to which everybody, the Comtesse herself not excepted, had contributed, the slope on the hither side was so steep that it was no easy matter to get a horse down it, and to force him up to the communal road on the far side was a yet more difficult undertaking; but in moments of peril a horse's instinct seems to be almost as effective as his rider's reason.

While the young Comtesse was hesitating to go with Marthe and calling on her for explanations, Michu, who from his eminence in the wood had been observing the course taken by the gendarmes and had seen through the detectives' plan, seeing that no one came, was beginning to despair. A picket of gendarmes surrounded the park wall, acting as sentries and forming a cordon through which no living creature could have passed undetected. Michu, lying prone on his stomach, his ear to the ground, measured, as Indians do, distance and time by sounds.

"I am too late!—I'll make Violette pay for this!" he muttered to himself. "Who'd have thought it would take so long to get the beggar drunk!—What am I to do?"

He heard the picket coming from the forest pass the grille, where it and the picket from the communal road were to meet and unite their forces.

"Five or six minutes yet!" he said to himself.

At that moment the Comtesse appeared. Michu put out his brawny hand and lifted her down into the covered way.

"Keep on, straight ahead!" And turning to his wife, "Conduct her to the spot where my horse is tied, and remember that the gendarmes have ears."

Seeing Catherine approach bringing the riding-whip, hat and gloves, and immediately after Gothard with the mare, he felt a great load taken off his mind, and this man, so fertile in resource, so prompt to act in emergencies, resolved to throw the gendarmes off the scent by a device that he had already successfully employed to fool Violette. Gothard had forced the mare up the steep bank of the moat as if by magic.

"What, you thought to muffle the animal's feet!—Good boy, I'll kiss you for it!" exclaimed the foreman, clasping Gothard in his arms.

Michu allowed the mare to walk off after her mistress and took the hat, gloves and whip.

"You are a lad of sense, you will understand me," he continued. "Put your horse at the bank, there, see if he is as handy at jumping as the mare, and when up cut across the fields and ride as if the old boy were at your heels in the direction of the farm, drawing the gendarmes after you. The picket is extended in open order, you see; you will make the fellows draw in and take close order," he added, completing his instructions with a sweeping gesture indicating the route the lad was to take. "And you, my girl, there is another bunch of gendarmes coming down on us by the road from Cinq-Cygne to Gondreville. I want you to start off in a direction directly opposite to that which Gothard



takes and draw them away from the chateau toward the forest. You understand: what I want is that there shall be no one to interfere with us here in the sunken road."

Catherine and the youth, who was subsequently to exhibit such wonderful quickness and intelligence in this affair, performed the part assigned them in a manner to make each of the bodies of gendarmes believe that their prey was escaping them. The dim and deceptive moonlight, distorting the appearance of objects, was an obstacle to their distinguishing the size, sex, apparel and numbers of those whom they were pursuing. So they started after the fugitives, full tilt, remembering the old precept, "Arrest everybody who runs away!" the unsoundness of which, as applied to the more delicate operations of the police, was set forth later in the vigorous rebuke which Corentin gave the corporal. Michu, who had reckoned on what their instinct would lead the gendarmes to do under the circumstances, reached the forest shortly after the young Comtesse, whom Marthe had guided to the appointed spot.

"Go back to the pavilion—run!" said he to Marthe. "The forest will be guarded by the Parisians; it is dangerous to remain here. We are likely to have need of all our liberty."

Michu unfastened his horse's bridle and requested the Comtesse to follow him.

"I shall go no further," Laurence replied, "until you have given me some explanation of the interest you show in me, for you are that Michu who—"

"Mademoiselle," he answered in a tone of gentleness, "my position can be explained in two brief words. Unknown to the MM. de Simeuse, I am the guardian of their fortune. My instructions to this end were received by me from their deceased father and the dear lady their mother, my protectress. Wherefore I have played the part of a furious Jacobin, in order that I might be of service to my young masters. I began my game too late, unfortunately; I was unable to save the old folk!"



At this point Michu's voice broke.

"Since the young men's flight I have sent them regularly such sums as were needed for their maintenance."

"Through the Breintmayers of Strasburg?" she asked.

"Yes, Mademoiselle, the correspondents of M. Girel of Troyes, who, being a Royalist, like me pretended to change his coat in order to save his fortune. The paper that your tenant picked up in the road one evening as we were returning from Troyes was relative to this business; it might have served to incriminate all hands, and my life was not my own but theirs, you see. I could not acquire possession of Gondreville. Situated as I was, a question as to where I got so much money from would have been equivalent to sending me to the block. I thought to wait and redeem the property later on; but that villain Marion was the instrument of another villain, Malin. All the same, Gondreville shall come back to its rightful owners. I will see to that. Four hours ago I had Malin covered by my rifle—oh, it was a dead sure thing!—*Dame!* if he were only dead Gondreville would be in the courts, it would be sold, and you might buy it. In the event of my death my wife would have given you a letter that would have told you how. But that brigand told his accomplice Grévin—another dirty blackguard—that the MM. de Simeuse were conspiring against the First Consul and were in the neighborhood, and that it would be better to hand them over to the authorities and so get rid of them and have peace at Gondreville. As I knew, however, that there were two spies from Paris hanging around here, I uncocked my rifle and lost no time in coming here, thinking that you would know where and how to convey warning to the young men. And there you have my story."

"You are a noble soul," said Laurence, extending her hand to Michu, who showed an inclination to go down on his knees and kiss it.

Laurence observed his movement, checked it and said to him—

"Arise, Michu!" in accents and with a look that made

him for the moment as happy as he had been miserable for the last twelve years.

"You reward me as if I had accomplished all that remains for me to do," said he. "Do you hear them, the hussars of the guillotine off yonder? We will go elsewhere to finish our conversation."

He took the mare by the bridle, stationing himself on the animal's off side, and said to the Comtesse.

"Your horsemanship will be tried; give your whole attention to keeping your seat, holding your mount in hand, and avoiding the low-hanging branches that might sweep you out of your saddle."

Then for a half-hour he led the young woman a harum-scarum chase through the wood at the mare's best and unrelaxed speed, now this way, now that, in and out, round and about, frequently doubling on his trail so as to mislead pursuers, until they came to a spot where he stopped.

"I don't know where I am, and I thought I knew the forest as well as you do," said the Comtesse, surveying her surroundings.

"We are exactly in the middle of it," he replied. "We have a couple of gendarmes on our trail, but we are safe."

The picturesque spot to which the foreman had brought Laurence was to exert such a powerful influence on the destinies of the principal personages of this drama, and on Micu as well, that it behooves the historian to describe it. The spot, moreover, as will be seen, acquired celebrity in the judicial annals of the Empire.

The forest of Nodemes had belonged to a monastery known as Notre-Dame. This monastery, captured, pillaged and demolished, disappeared utterly—the monks and all their temporal possessions. The forest, long the object of covetousness, was incorporated in the domain of the Comtes de Champagne, who afterward hypothecated it and allowed it to be sold. In the course of six centuries nature spread her rich and puissant green mantle over the ruins, obliterating them so completely that the site of what

had been one of the finest examples of conventual architecture was marked only by an eminence of moderate height, overshadowed by handsome trees and hemmed in by thick hedges and impenetrable copses which Michu, subsequent to 1794, had taken it into his head to make yet more impenetrable by planting thorny acacias in the intervals between the bushes. There was a pond at the bottom of the eminence, indicating the existence of subterranean springs, which doubtless had determined in times long past the situation of the monastery. Only the holder of the title-deeds to the forest of Nodessme could have divined the etymology of that name, eight centuries old, or known that in the middle of the wood there once had been a convent. When the first claps of the thunder of the Revolution made themselves heard the Marquis de Simeuse, obliged to refer to his title-deeds to settle a contested point and chancing to light upon these particulars, with a secret purpose in mind that may readily be imagined applied himself to searching for the site of the monastery. The keeper, to whom the forest was so familiar, naturally assisted his master in this undertaking, and it was to his skill in woodcraft that the discovery of the locality was due. Observing the direction of the five principal forest roads, of which some were almost entirely obliterated, he saw that they all ended in the vicinity of the mound and the near-by pond, whither the people must at one time have resorted in numbers from Troyes, from the valleys of Arcis and Cinq-Cygne, and from Bar-sur-Aube. It was the Marquis's intention to explore the interior of the barrow, but it would not have answered to employ in that operation men living in the neighborhood. Circumstances proving unpropitious, he abandoned his researches, leaving Michu's curiosity unsatisfied as to whether the mound contained a buried treasure or merely the foundations of the old abbey. The foreman resolved to continue the archeological enterprise on his own account; there was a spot between two trees just on a level with the pond, at the foot of the only escarpment of the eminence where, when he stamped his



foot, the earth gave back a hollow sound. So, one fine night, equipped with a pick, he sought the spot, and his labor was rewarded by the discovery of a subterranean apartment to which access was afforded by a short flight of stone steps. The pond, which is not more than three feet deep in its deepest part, is shaped like a shovel, with its handle projecting from the eminence, and would lead one to believe that there issues from that artificial rock a fountain that loses itself by infiltration in the vast forest. This marsh, encircled by trees that love the water, alders, willows, ashes, is the common centre of many convergent paths, relics of ancient highways and woodland walks, to-day deserted. The pond, whose waters, stagnant to appearance, are constantly renewed, covered with cresses and broad-leaved plants, displays a surface mantled over with a coat of emerald green, hardly to be distinguished from its shores, that are clothed with a dense growth of fine, short, succulent grass. The tender herbage is too remote from man's habitations, though, for animals, save the denizens of the forest, to come and graze on it. Convinced that no living thing could exist below the marsh, and deterred by the inaccessibility of the approaches, hunters and foresters had never visited or explored that quiet nook inhabited by the oldest and stateliest monarchs of the wood, that Michu reserved for a grand *battue* when time should come for them to be laid low. At the further end of the underground apartment is a smaller chamber with a vaulted roof, finished in cut stone and perfectly cleanly and wholesome, reminding one of what used to be called the *in pace*, the convent dungeon. The salubrity of the place and the well-preserved condition of the steps and the inner cell were probably due to the spring, which seemed to have been respected by the destroyers, and to a wall of brick and cement, apparently of immense thickness, reminding one of the constructions of the ancient Romans, which served to keep back the surface water that percolated through the roof. Michu brought big flat stones and laid them over the entrance to



this retreat; then, to keep the secret entirely in his own possession and preserve it inviolate, he made it a rule, instead of entering the cellar from the direction of the pond, always to climb the wooded eminence and descend by way of the escarpment. When our two fugitives reached the spot the moon was silvering with her mellow light the summits of the secular trees upon the mound, and playing hide-and-seek among the magnificent masses of the arborial promontories described in many diverse shapes by the roads that centred there, some rounded, others pointed, this terminating in a single tree, that in a cluster.

Thence the gaze of the beholder was irresistibly attracted by the charm of numerous perspectives fading in the distance, in which the eye followed now the sinuous windings of a woodland path, now the sublime spectacle of a long forest alley, or again a darkling wall of verdure where the shadows rested. The sullen, slumbering surface of the pond, in the open stretches left uncovered by the cresses and nenuphars, broke into life and flashed and sparkled like diamonds in the silvery light that filtered through the branches. The music made by multitudinous frogs alone disturbed the deep stillness of this charming forest nook, whose wild perfume awakened in the soul ideas of freedom.

"Are we in safety here?" the Comtesse asked Michu.

"Yes, Mademoiselle. But there remains something for us both to do. Lead the horses up yonder low hill and tie them to the trees, and fasten a handkerchief about the muzzle of each of them," said he, removing his neckcloth and giving it to her; "our beasts are intelligent, they will know enough to hold their peace. When you have done that, come straight down that embankment to the waterside—be careful not to let your skirt catch on the bushes—you will find me at the bottom."

While the Comtesse was performing the duties assigned to her, Michu removed the stones and uncovered the entrance to the cellar. The Comtesse, who had believed

that she knew her forest thoroughly, was immeasurably surprised by what she saw. Michu replaced the stones above the entrance; a mason could not have done it in a more workmanlike manner. Hardly had he finished when the tramp of horses and the voices of gendarmes resounded in the silence of the night; but he drew his tinder-box from his pocket, tranquilly lighted a sliver of fat pine, and conducted the Comtesse into the *in pace*, where he found the remnant of the candle that had helped him to explore the chamber on a previous occasion. The thick iron door had been eaten through in places by rust, but it had been repaired by the foreman; it was fastened on the outside by wooden bars that fell into sockets placed on either side of the doorway. The Comtesse, half dead with fatigue, sank down upon a stone bench over which still hung an iron ring soldered into the wall.

"We have a salon for our confab, you see," said Michu. "Now let the gendarmes do their worst; they may run off with our horses, but that is the extent of the harm they can do us."

"Run off with our horses!" Laurence repeated. "That would mean the death of my cousins and the MM. d'Hauteserre. Come, how much do you know, exactly?"

Michu repeated what little he had overheard of the conversation between Malin and Grévin.

"They are on their way to Paris, they are due to arrive there to-morrow morning," said the Comtesse when he had finished.

"They are lost!" exclaimed Michu. "You know that every one entering or leaving the city is subjected to a rigid examination at the barriers. It is Malin's interest that my masters should compromise themselves in every way possible and so destroy themselves."

"It is too bad that I am not better acquainted with the general scope of the affair!" cried Laurence. "How can we convey information to Georges, Rivière and Moreau? Where are they to be found? Well, never mind; we will

think only of my cousins and the d'Hauteserres; you must get to them at any and every cost."

"The telegraph travels faster than the speediest horse," returned Michu, "and of all the nobles involved in this conspiracy none will be tracked with more ardor than your cousins. If I succeed in coming up with them, here is the spot where we must house them; we will keep them here until the affair has blown over. Their poor father must have been guided by more than human wisdom when he put me in the way of discovering this retreat; he must have had a presentiment that it would be a refuge to his sons in their hour of peril!"

"My mare is from the Comte d'Artois' stables, she is the offspring of his best English stallion," said she; "but she has covered thirty-six leagues to-day, she would not carry you to the end, she would drop dead."

"My horse is pretty fresh," said Michu, "and if you covered thirty-six leagues, I should not have more than eighteen to ride?"

"Twenty-three," she replied, "for they are now five hours on their way. You should find them somewhere above Lagny, probably at Coupvrai, whence they are to set out at daylight disguised as bargemen; they intend to enter Paris by the river. Here is something," she added, taking from her finger the half of her mother's wedding-ring, "which, if you show it them, they will trust you. I gave them the other half. The keeper at Coupvrai is the father of one of their enlisted men; he is to conceal them to-night in the abandoned shed of some charcoal-burners in the depths of the forest. They are eight in all. The MM. d'Hauteserre and four privates are with my cousins."

"Mademoiselle, we are not going to break our necks running after private soldiers; we will look out for the MM. de Simeuse and let the others shift for themselves as best they may. Is it not sufficient to warn them of their danger?"

"Abandon the d'Hauteserres? Never!" she cried. "Either all shall perish or all be saved!"



"What, the little country gentlemen?" Michu objected.

"True, they are only chevaliers," she replied, "I know that; but still they are related to the Cinq-Cygnés and the Simeuses. Restore to me, then, my cousins and the d'Hauteserres, and advise with them how they may all most quickly and safely regain this forest."

"The gendarmes are here again! Do you hear them colloquing together in a whisper?"

"Well, fortune has already twice befriended you this evening. Go! and bring them back; conceal them in this vault, where they will be safe from all pursuit! I can do nothing to help you," she said with impotent rage; "I should simply be a pharos to guide the footsteps of the foe. The police, seeing me leading my usual tranquil life, will never suspect that my relatives are in the forest. So, the question resolves itself into how we may obtain five horses capable of making the distance from Lagny in six hours, five horses that will go till they drop dead."

"And the money?" suggested Michu, who had been giving profound attention to the young Comtesse's words.

"I have supplied my cousins; I gave them a hundred louis last night."

"I will bring them safe through," exclaimed Michu. "You will have to deny yourself the pleasure of seeing them when they are safely housed. My wife or my little boy will convey food and drink to them twice a week. As I cannot answer for my own safety, however, I wish to say to you, Mademoiselle, that the interior of the main beam in the garret of my pavilion has been drilled out with an auger. In the cavity, which is stopped with a wooden plug, you will find a plan of a portion of the forest. The trees which you will see marked with a red cross on the plan you will find daubed with black paint at the bottom of their trunk on the ground. Each of these trees is a pointer. At the foot of the third oak tree to the left of each of these pointers you will find, buried seven feet in the ground and distant two feet from the trunk, a round tin box containing

one hundred thousand francs in gold. These eleven trees—there are only eleven of them—constitute the entire fortune of the Simeuses now that Gondreville has passed out of their hands."

"The noblesse will not recover in a hundred years from the blows that have been dealt it," Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne slowly said.

"Is there a password?" Michu inquired.

"'France and Charles' for the privates, 'Laurence and Louis' for the d'Hauteserres and the Simeuses. Mon Dieu! that I should have seen them yesterday for the first time in eleven years, and to know to-day that they are in danger of death—and what a death! Michu," said she with an expression of deep melancholy, "be as prudent during the next fifteen hours as you have shown yourself grand and devoted during these last twelve years. If evil should befall my cousins I should die— No," she hastily added, correcting herself, "I would live long enough to kill Bonaparte."

"There will be two of us for that job, when the time is ripe for it."

Laurence seized the foreman's horny hand and gave it a vigorous squeeze after the manner of the English. Michu drew out his watch; it was midnight.

"We must get out of this, at whatever risk," said he. "Let the gendarme look out for himself who attempts to stop me! And you, Madame la Comtesse—don't consider me disrespectful—get on your horse and ride back at speed to Cinq-Cygne; the police are there, amuse them."

Michu, when he had uncovered the entrance, heard no sound; he threw himself down and applied his ear to the ground, then rose hurriedly.

"They are over Troyes way somewhere, on the edge of the forest," said he; "I'll fix their flint for 'em!"

He assisted the Comtesse up the steps and replaced the stones. When he had finished he heard himself called by Laurence's pleasant voice, who wished to see him on his

horse before she got on hers. The rough man's eyes were wet with tears as he exchanged a parting look with his young mistress, but hers were perfectly dry.

"He was right, we will amuse them," she said when the sound of his horse's receding steps was lost in the distance.

And giving her mare the rein she struck off at a gallop in the direction of Cinq-Cygne.

When she was apprised that her sons were menaced with death, Mme. d'Hauteserre, who could not bring herself to believe that the Revolution was over and had a vivid recollection of the summary manner in which justice was administered in those days, recovered her wits and strength of mind by the very excess of the grief that had served to deprive her of them. Drawn by a horrible curiosity that she was unable to withstand she descended to the salon, the picture presented by which at that moment would have been a fit subject for a genre painter. Still seated at the card-table, the curé was mechanically toying with the counters and covertly watching Peyrade and Corentin, who were standing at one of the corners of the chimney and talking together in an undertone. Several times did Corentin's perspicacious glance encounter the equally keen glance of the curé, but as two adversaries who, on crossing swords and finding themselves of equal force, resume their guard, both promptly turned their eyes elsewhere. Old man d'Hauteserre, planted on his long slender legs like a heron, stood at the side of the big, fat, gross and gluttonous Goulard, in the attitude which his stupefaction had originally imparted to him and which he had been unable to shake off. The mayor, although he affected the attire of a bourgeois, always had the appearance of a valet. Both were stupidly regarding the two gendarmes, placed one on each side of the still snivelling Gothard, whose hands had been bound so tightly that they were purple and swollen. Catherine preserved the attitude of her selection, full of simplicity and artlessness but quite impenetrable. The



corporal, who, as Corentin had been at pains to inform him, had made an egregious ass of himself by arresting those two honest, innocent young people, was evidently undecided whether to go or to remain. He stood by himself in the middle of the salon carefully considering the matter, his hand on the hilt of his sword, his eyes fixed on the Parisians. A painter wishing to depict anxiety and alarm should have seen the group composed of the Durieus and other servants of the chateau. One might have heard the buzzing of the flies had it not been for Gothard's convulsive sobs.

When the mother, supported by Mlle. Goujet, whose red eyes bore witness that she also had been weeping, showed her pale, scared face in the doorway, the eyes of all in the salon were turned on the two women. The two agents had hoped, in the same measure as the inmates of the chateau had feared, to see Laurence enter. The spontaneous movement of the entire company, servants and masters, was produced, the beholder would have declared, by one of those simple mechanisms which set an assortment of wooden manikins wagging their heads and winking their eyes with perfect uniformity of gesture.

Mme. d'Hauteserre advanced into the room with three long and disordered strides until she stood before Corentin, to whom she said in broken but loud and distinct accents:

"Have pity on me, Monsieur, and answer; of what are my sons accused? And do you believe that they are here?"

The curé, who had seemed to say to himself at sight of the old lady, "She is going to commit some blunder," lowered his eyes.

"My duty and the nature of the mission with which I am charged will not allow me to answer your question," Corentin replied with an air partaking about equally of condescension and raillery.

This rebuff, to which the young sprig's detestable courtesy imparted additional bitterness, seemed to exert

a petrifying influence on the old mother, who dropped into a fauteuil beside Abbé Goujet, clasped her hands, and appeared to pray.

"Where did you arrest this sniveller?" Corentin asked the corporal, pointing to Laurence's little page.

"On the road skirting the park wall that leads to the farm; the young rascal was making tracks for the wood of Closeaux."

"And the girl?"

"Oh, she? It was Olivier who pinched her."

"In which direction was she going?"

"Toward Gondreville."

"They were going in opposite directions, then?" Corentin suggested.

"Yes," replied the gendarme.

"They are the Citoyenne Cinq-Cygne's little manservant and maid, aren't they?" Corentin asked the mayor.

"Yes," Goulard admitted.

Peyrade, having first exchanged a few whispered words with Corentin, left the room, taking with him the corporal.

At that moment the Arcis corporal came in, stepped up to Corentin, and said to him in a whisper:

"I am acquainted with every inch of the ground; I have raked the premises, stables and every place, as you might say, with a fine-tooth comb; you'll not find the lads here, unless their relatives have killed them and buried 'em in the garden. We did not forget to sound all the walls and floors with the butts of our muskets."

Peyrade, who returned just then, signed to Corentin to come with him, and led him away for a look at the causeway across the moat, calling his colleague's attention to the sunken road that served as its continuation on the further side.

"We have caught on to the manœuvre," said Peyrade.

"And I can tell you just how the thing was worked,"

Corentin rejoined. "That young monkey and the girl bamboozled those infernal idiots the gendarmes, and thereby gave the game a chance to cut away."

"We shall not know the rights of the matter until morning," replied Peyrade. "The road is soft; I have stationed a man at either end to close it against travel. When it is light enough to see, the footprints in the mud will inform us who of our friends have passed this way of late."

"Here are the tracks of a horse's shoe," said Corentin. "Let's go and pay a visit to the stables."

"How many horses have you here?" Peyrade asked M. d'Hauteserre and Goulard on his return to the salon accompanied by Corentin.

"Come, Monsieur le Maire, you can answer if you will, speak up!" cried Corentin, seeing the functionary disinclined to give the desired information.

"Well, then, there are the Comtesse's mare, and M. d'Hauteserre's horse, and Gothard's."

"We saw only one in the stable," Peyrade observed.

"Mademoiselle is out on horseback," said Durieu.

"Does your ward often ride by night in this way?" the sceptical Peyrade inquired of M. d'Hauteserre.

"Very often," the good man replied with perfect simplicity; "M. le Maire will tell you that she does."

"Everybody knows that she is queer," Catherine added. "She was looking at the sky before going to bed, and I shouldn't wonder if the gleam of your bayonets in the distance put some notion in her head. She wanted to know, she said to me as she left the room, if there was going to be another revolution."

"When did she go out?" asked Peyrade.

"When she saw your guns."

"And which way did she go?"

"I don't know."

"And the other horse?" inquired Corentin.

"The g-g-gendarmes ca-ca-captured him!" Gothard stammered.



"And where were you going at the time?" one of the gendarmes asked him.

"I was fuf-fuf-following my m-m-mistress to the fuf-fuf-farm."

The gendarme looked at Corentin expectantly, as if waiting to receive an order, but the answers they had thus far received were so ingeniously compounded of falsehood and truth, they betrayed such profound dissimulation mingled with such child-like innocence, that the two Parisians exchanged a look which seemed to convey a reiteration of Peyrade's verdict, "These are no greenhorns!"

The gentleman's wits appeared unequal to the task of comprehending an epigram. The mayor was simply stupid. The mother, daft in her maternity, distracted the agents with questions silly in their innocence. The servants had undoubtedly been aroused from a sound slumber. In presence of these various facts, and forming his estimate of these diverse characters, Corentin saw at once that his only adversary was Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne. The police, no matter how adroit it may be, always labors under countless disadvantages. Not only is it forced to learn everything that the conspirator already knows, but it has to frame a thousand suppositions and hypotheses before arriving at the true one. The conspirator's thoughts are directed without respite or cessation on his safety, while the policeman's faculties are dormant except during the hours when he is actually on duty. If the chances of treachery among the members were only eliminated, nothing would be more easy than to conspire. One conspirator has more brains than the entire force of the police with its immense facilities. Corentin and Peyrade saw that their plans were divined and themselves checkmated, by whom they could not tell. It was as if, after chasing a malefactor down a long dark passage, they had suddenly been confronted by a door, too stout for them to force, behind which they could hear the sound of voices and derisive laughter. It was aggravating, it was an *impasse*.

"One thing is certain," said the corporal from Arcis, approaching and speaking in their ear, "if the MM. d'Hauteserre and de Simeuse were here last night, they either occupied the beds of the father, the mother, Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne, or the men and women servants, or else they spent the night perambulating the park, for there is not the least trace of their presence."

"Who can have put them on their guard?" Corentin inquired of Peyrade. "The only persons in the secret so far are the First Consul, Fouché, the ministers, the Prefect of Police, and Malin."

"We will leave a few moutons in the district," Peyrade whispered in Corentin's ear.

"It will be all the more amiable of you that they will be in Champagne," rejoined the curé, who, catching the single word mouton, divined all and could not repress a smile.

"Mon Dieu!" thought Corentin, answering the curé's smile with another, "there is but one man of sense in all this company! He is the only one that I have any chance of getting on with; let's try conclusions with him."

"Messieurs—" began the mayor, addressing the two agents and apparently desirous of affording some proof of his devotion to the First Consul.

"You may as well say 'citizens'; the Republic is not dead yet," Corentin rejoined, looking at the priest and laughing.

"Citizens," the mayor resumed, "just as I entered this salon, and before I had time to open my mouth, Catherine came hurrying in to get her mistress's hat, gloves and whip."

A low, deep murmur of horror burst from the lips of all present except Gothard. All eyes, barring those of the agents and the gendarmes, flashed flame and fury at Goulard, the informer.

"It is well, Citizen Mayor," said Peyrade. "The matter is clear as day to us. The Citizeness Cinq-Cygne received a most opportune warning," he added, looking at Corentin with visible distrust.

"Corporal, put the nippers on that young man," said Corentin to the gendarme, "and place him in a room by himself. Lock the girl up also," he added, indicating Catherine. "You will conduct the search for papers," he continued, addressing Peyrade, in whose ear he spoke a few words privately. "Ransack every place, spare nothing. Monsieur l'Abbé," he said to the curé in a confidential tone, "I have something of importance to communicate to you."

And the pair passed out into the garden.

"Attend to what I say, Monsieur l'Abbé—there is no one by to hear—you appear to me to have sense enough for a bishop and will understand me; you are my sole reliance to save two families which, through sheer wrongheadedness, are about to allow themselves to become involved in a ruin that will be irretrievable. MM. d'Hauteserre and de Simeuse were betrayed by one of those infamous spies whom governments, in their desire for information, are in the habit of surreptitiously introducing into all conspiracies. Do not confound me with the miserable creature who is with me; he is connected with the police, while I hold a responsible position in the consular cabinet, of which I am acquainted with all the secrets. No one desires the ruin of the MM. de Simeuse; if Malin would like to see them executed, the First Consul, if they are here—and provided they have no evil purposes—would stop them on the brink of the precipice, for he loves a brave soldier. My colleague is invested with all the authority; I am nothing in appearance, but I know the true inwardness of the case. The agent has Malin's promise, who has assured him of his protection, a place under government, and a pocketful of money, for all I know, if he can find the two Simeuses and deliver them up to the authorities. The First Consul, who is really a great man, is not in sympathy with men of such grasping proclivities. I do not wish to know whether or not the young men are here," said he, observing a gesture on the part of the curé, "but there is only one way in which they can be



saved. You know the law of 6th Floréal, year X.; it extends amnesty to such émigrés as are still in foreign parts conditional upon their returning by the 1st Vendémiaire of the year XI.—by September of the year just past, that is; but as the MM. de Simeuse, and the MM. d'Hauteserre likewise, have held commissions in Condé's army, they fall within the list of exceptions provided by that law; hence their presence in France is a crime against the State, and will suffice, under existing circumstances, to convict them of complicity in a treasonable conspiracy. The First Consul is conscious of the defects inherent in this exception, which rears a crop of irreconcilable enemies against his government; he wishes it intimated to the MM. de Simeuse that, provided they address to him a petition stating that they have returned to France with an honest determination to obey the laws of the land and declaring their readiness to take the constitutional oath, no proceedings will be instituted against them. You will understand that the petition should be presented to him prior to their arrest, and should be antedated by a few days; you can use my services for its delivery. I do not ask where the young gentlemen are," said he, seeing the curé repeat his dissenting gesture; "we are certain to run them to earth, unfortunately; the forest is guarded, the approaches to Paris are watched, as is likewise the frontier. Now listen! If the gentlemen are between this forest and Paris they will infallibly be captured; if they are in Paris they cannot escape the detectives; if they make for the frontier they will be stopped. The First Consul loves the *ci-devants* and cannot endure the Republicans, the reason of which is obvious: if he is aiming at a throne, he must first strangle liberty. All this is strictly between you and me. So, think the matter over carefully. I will wait until to-morrow, I will be blind; but be careful how you trust the agent; that confounded Provençal is the servant of Old Nick, he is Fouché's mouthpiece, as I am Napoleon's."

"If the MM. de Simeuse are here," said the curé, "I

would give an arm and ten pints of my blood to save them; but, if Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne is their confidante, I swear by all my hopes of salvation that she has divulged none of their secrets and has not done me the honor to consult me. As matters stand, I am well satisfied with her discretion, if it was discretion. We played boston last night, as is our daily custom, until half-past ten o'clock in the midst of the profoundest quiet; we saw nothing and heard nothing. A child cannot pass through this unfrequented valley unnoticed by the inhabitants, and for the last two weeks no stranger has come our way. Why, MM. de Si-meuse and d'Hautesserre, the four of them, would have had as little chance of being unseen and unheard as a troop of cavalry. The old gentleman and his wife have announced their adhesion to the government, and have tried their utmost to induce their sons to return to them; they wrote to them no later than day before yesterday. Upon my soul and conscience, nothing less than your startling descent on us could have shaken me in my firm belief that the lads are still in Germany. Between you and me, the only person here who does not give the First Consul all the credit he is entitled to is the young Comtesse."

"You are a deep one!" thought Corentin. "Well," he replied, "if the young men have to face a platoon of soldiers with loaded muskets, they will have brought it on themselves; I wash my hands of the business."

He had brought the Abbé to a spot where the unobstructed moonlight fell full upon them and, as he uttered those ominous words, looked up suddenly into his face. The priest showed signs of deep distress, but no trace of guilty knowledge.

"Understand, Monsieur l'Abbé," Corentin continued, "that in the eyes of minor officials, their claim to the Gondreville estates makes them doubly criminal. In fine, I would have them treat of their affairs with God, not with His saints."

"There is a plot, then?" the curé innocently asked.

"An infamous, odious, cowardly plot," Corentin replied, "and so entirely foreign to the generous instincts of the French people that it cannot fail to meet with universal execration."

"Well, there is nothing cowardly about Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne," exclaimed the curé.

"Monsieur l'Abbé," Corentin rejoined, "see here (this is still between you and me), the proofs that we now have of her complicity are entirely satisfactory to us, but not sufficient to meet the requirements of justice. She took to flight immediately on our approach—And yet I had sent the mayor to you."

"Yes, but for one who professes such a desire to save them, you came in a little too close upon the mayor's heels," said the Abbé.

At this the two men looked at each other, and all was said between them. They belonged, both of them, to that class of profound anatomists of human thought for whom an inflection of the voice, a look, a word suffice to divine the working of a mind, as the savage divines the presence of his enemy by signs invisible to the eye of a European.

"I thought to draw him out, and I exposed my hand!" said Corentin to himself.

"What a consummate rascal!" thought the curé.

The clock in the tower of the old church was striking midnight as Corentin and the priest re-entered the salon. They could hear, in the regions above, the slamming of chamber and closet doors. The gendarmes were stripping the coverings from the beds. Peyrade, with the unfailing instinct of the spy, was poking and prying everywhere, sounding everything. The servants, whom their fears or their curiosity had kept from their beds, stood watching the proceedings with mingled terror and indignation. M. d'Hauteserre exchanged looks of compassion with his wife and Mlle. Goujet. A horrible curiosity to see what would happen next made everybody wakeful. At that moment Peyrade came down from above and entered the



salon, having in his hand a carved sandal-wood box, doubtless a souvenir of one of old Admiral de Simeuse's cruises in Chinese waters. The pretty casket was flat in shape and about the size of a quarto volume.

Peyrade beckoned to Corentin and led him to the embrasure of a window.

"I have it!" said he. "That Michu, who declared his readiness to purchase Gondreville from Marion for eight hundred thousand francs in gold, and who threatened Malin's life a while ago, is no other than the de Simeuses's agent. It was one and the same interest that caused him to threaten Marion and point his rifle at Malin. He appeared to me capable of having ideas, he has but one idea; he guessed at the true condition of affairs, and came here to warn the people."

"Malin must have talked of the conspiracy with his friend the notary," said Corentin, enlarging on the inductions of his colleague, "and Michu, from his ambush, doubtless heard him speak of the Simeuses. If he denied himself the gratification of a shot at Malin for the time being, it was only to avert a disaster which appealed to him with more force than the loss of Gondreville."

"He saw through us as soon as he set eyes on us," observed Peyrade. "I remember that that peasant struck me at the time as being more than usually intelligent."

"Oh, that only shows that he was on his guard," replied Corentin. "But after all, old chap, don't let us deceive ourselves: treason is something that smells to heaven, and primitive people scent it from a great distance."

"That only helps us along the more," said the Provençal.

"Send me the corporal of the Arcis squad," Corentin shouted to one of the gendarmes. "Suppose we send a man down to his pavilion?" he suggested to Peyrade.

"Violette, our eyes and ears, is there," remarked the Provençal.

"We started out without having received a report from him," Corentin replied. "We should have taken Sabatier

along with us: we are short-handed, being only two. Corporal," said he to the gendarme who appeared upon the scene just then and whom he ensconced between Peyrade and himself, "don't you go and let yourself be bamboozled the way the corporal from Troyes was a while ago. We have a notion that Michu has a finger in this business; go down to his pavilion, have your wits about you, and report to us what you discover."

"One of my men heard horses in the forest just as they were arresting the two young domestics," returned the gendarme, "and if any others should attempt to hide there they'll find four stout lads on the lookout to receive them."

He left the room, and outside upon the stone paved road across the lawn was presently heard the quick clatter of a galloping horse's hoofs; the sounds, receding in the distance, grew fainter, then ceased entirely.

"*Allons!* either they are making for Paris, or else they have taken the back track and are on their way to Germany," said Corentin to himself.

He flung himself down upon a chair, extracted a memorandum-book from the pocket of his jacket, scribbled two notes in pencil, sealed them, and summoned a gendarme to his side.

"To Troyes with these, and mind you do not loiter by the way. Arouse the prefect, and tell him to avail himself of the first streak of dawn to put the telegraph in operation."

The gendarme got on his horse and was off like a shot. The meaning of this movement and Corentin's purpose were so apparent that the inmates of the chateau were sick at heart; yet this anxiety was only another drop added to their cup of bitterness, for at that moment all eyes were fixed on the precious sandal-wood box. While carrying on their conversation, the two agents were striving to decipher what might be the meaning hid under those eager looks. A sort of cold rage stirred the heart of those two men, to whom the universal terror was as sweet incense in their nostrils. The

policeman has all the emotions of the hunter; but, while exerting all the resources of mind and body, where the latter is eager in the pursuit of a hare, a partridge, a deer, the object of the former is the safety of the State or of the Prince, with the prospect of winning for himself wealth and distinction. Wherefore the tracking of men surpasses in interest the other kind of chase in exactly the same proportion as man is superior to the lower animals. And, moreover, the detective feels the necessity of elevating his role to all the grandeur and importance of the interests to which he devotes his energies. Any one will readily perceive, therefore, without it being necessary for him to engage in the calling, that the expenditure of passion on the part of the detective is quite as great as that of the sportsman hunting his game. So, the closer those two men came to the light, the more eager were they; but their faces, their eyes were expressionless and cold, just as their suspicions, ideas and plans were impenetrable. It was a spectacle calculated to make one shudder who could have watched those two bloodhounds of the law closing in upon their quarry, relentless and inexorable as fate, nosing their way patiently toward their end with the assistance of every faintest clew, using their almost canine sagacity to get at the truth by the rapid examination of probabilities. How was it, why was it that those men of genius were sunk so low when they might stand so high? What imperfection, what vice, what passion had reduced them to that level? Is a man born a policeman as another is born a thinker, a writer, a statesman, a painter, a general, and is he foredoomed all his life long to spy upon his fellowmen as the others speak, write, govern, paint and fight battles? The servants of the chateau were all of one mind: "Will not the thunder of heaven descend upon these miscreants?" they thought. The thirst for vengeance was universal. There might have been a revolt had it not been for the presence of the gendarmes.

"Has no one the key of the box?" asked the cynical



Peyrade, questioning the assemblage as much by the movement of his big red nose as by his voice.

The Provençal, not without a feeling of alarm, saw that there were no gendarmes remaining in the room; Corentin and he were left without support. Corentin drew from his pocket a small poniard and proceeded to insert it between the lid and the body of the box. At that moment was heard, first out upon the highway, then upon the pavement of the road that crossed the lawn, the fear-compelling sound of a madly galloping horse; but the fear became terror as the horse was heard to come down with a crash at the foot of the central tower and give utterance to piteous groans. A commotion akin to that which ensues upon the bursting of the thunder pervaded all the spectators at sight of Laurence, whose presence the rustle of her skirts had served to announce; her servants made way and arranged themselves in a double line to let her pass. The rapidity of her course had not sufficed to quell the anguish produced in her by the discovery of the conspiracy. Her hopes all blasted, she galloped among the ruins, reflecting bitterly on the hateful necessity of submitting to the consular authority. Had it not been for the danger that menaced the four gentlemen, the thought of which enabled her to bear up under her fatigue and discouragement, she must have fallen fainting by the way. She had almost killed her mare to come and place herself between death and her cousins. Seeing this heroic maiden with her pale, drawn face, her veil awry and riding-whip in hand, standing in the doorway whence her blazing eyes took in and mastered all the details of the scene, every one saw by the imperceptible change that crept over Corentin's sour and troubled face that the two real adversaries were at last face to face. A duel to the death was imminent. At sight of the casket in Corentin's hands the young Comtesse raised her whip and, darting forward, cut him with it across the knuckles to such good purpose that the box fell to the ground; she picked it up, flung it upon the blazing coals and, before the two agents had time to recover from their

surprise, stationed herself before the fireplace in an attitude of menace. Laurence's eyes flashed scorn; her pale face and disdainful lips conveyed to the two men even more of defiant insult than the autocratic gesture with which she had awarded to Corentin the treatment of a venomous beast. Old d'Hauteserre's spirit was aroused; he remembered that he was a chevalier; all the blood in his body rushed to his face; he regretted that he no longer wore a sword. The servants at first were ready to jump for joy. The vengeance so ardently desired had descended and smitten one of those men. But their rejoicing was of brief duration, it was supplanted by frightful doubts and fears: they could still hear the gendarmes carrying on their perquisition in the rooms above.

The *spy*—a noun of multitude in which are confounded all the shades of difference that distinguish the men of the police, for the general public does not trouble itself to discriminate between the diverse employments and dignities of those who occupy positions in the great sanitarium so indispensable to governments—the spy, I say, is magnificent and remarkable in this, that he always preserves his equanimity; he has the Christian humility of the priest, scorn and contempt are to him as naught, and he, for his part, sets them up as a barrier between him and a foolish and stubborn generation that refuses to understand him; his brow is of brass for insult and injury, he moves forward to his end like some great animal whose mighty carapace is impervious save by artillery; but, in further resemblance to the animal, let him be wounded once in his self-esteem, his fury will be the greater, he will bellow the louder, that he had believed his cuirass to be impenetrable. That cut of the whip across his fingers, irrespective of the mere physical pain, was to Corentin the cannon-ball that comes crashing through the carapace; that exhibition of loathing and contempt, coming from that high-minded and sublime girl, humiliated him, not in the eyes of that little world alone but in his own. Peyrade, the man from Provence, darted toward the hearth. Lau-

rence aimed a kick at him, but he caught her foot, raised it from the floor, and compelled her, for decorum's sake, to reseal herself in the easy chair in which she had lately been slumbering. It was a farce coming as an interlude between the acts of a tragedy, a contrast which is not infrequent in human affairs. Peyrade burned his hand in securing possession of the blazing casket, but he had it safe; he deposited it on the floor and sat down on it. These trifling events succeeded one another rapidly, without a word being spoken. Corentin, the smart of whose castigation had somewhat subsided, kept Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne in her chair by holding her hands.

"I trust, *belle citoyenne*, that you will not oblige me to have recourse to force," said he with his offensive courtesy.

Peyrade's action had resulted in extinguishing the fire by shutting off the supply of air.

"Gendarmes, this way!" he shouted, without changing his uncouth position.

"Will you promise to be good?" Corentin insolently asked Laurence, picking up his poniard, but carefully avoiding all appearance of threatening her with it.

"The contents of that box do not concern the government," said she with a trace of sadness in her air and accent. "When you have read the letters that it contains you will be ashamed, low and degraded though you are, that you violated their secrets.—But does shame or reverence for anything survive in you?" she added after a pause.

The curé gave Laurence a look as if to say, "In the name of God, be calm!"

Peyrade rose. The bottom of the box, where it had been in contact with the coals, was almost entirely consumed and left its imprint on the carpet. The top was charred, the sides were ready to give way. That grotesque parody of a Scævola, who had just offered as a sacrifice to the tutelary divinity of the police, Fear, the seat of his



apricot-colored small clothes, drew apart the two sides of the box as he might have spread open the covers of a book, and out upon the green cloth of the card-table there fell three letters and two locks of hair. The dawn of a triumphant smile was on his face as he looked at Corentin, when he saw that the hair was white, of two different shades of whiteness. Corentin left Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne and came over to read the letter from which the tresses had fallen.

Laurence also rose, and came and stood beside the two detectives.

"Oh! read it out," said she; "it shall be your punishment."

And as they still read only with their eyes, she herself read the following letter:

"DEAR LAURENCE—My husband and I have been informed of your noble conduct on the day of our arrest. We know that you love our dear twins with an affection as tender and as impartial as that which we bear them; we have therefore selected you to be the depositary of a trust that will be to them at the same time a source of pleasure and of sadness. The headsman has just been with us to cut off our hair, for in a few moments we are to die, and he has promised to see that you receive the only souvenirs of us that we have it in our power to leave to our beloved orphans. Preserve these relics of us then, to give to them in happier days. We place here for each of them a last kiss, with our fond benediction. Our last thought will be, first for our sons, then for you, and finally of God! Love them well.

"BERTHE DE CINQ-CYGNE.

"JEAN DE SIMEUSE."

All eyes were wet with tears when the reading was completed.

Laurence looked sternly at the two agents and in a steady voice said to them:

"You are less capable of pity than the headsman!"

Corentin tranquilly replaced the tresses in the letter and laid the letter on the table, placing a basket filled with counters on top of it that it might not be blown away. Such cold-bloodedness appeared revolting amid the general emotion. Peyrade unfolded the other two letters.

"Oh, as for those," said Laurence, "their terms are almost similar. You have heard the last will and testament, now for the manner of its execution. Hereafter my heart will have secrets for no one. That is all."

"ANDERNACH, 1794.—*Before the Battle.*

"MY DEAR LAURENCE—My love for you is for life, and I wish that you should know it, but I also wish you to know, in case I remain on the field to-morrow, that my brother Paul-Marie loves you no less than I do. My only comfort in dying will be the certainty that some day you will be able to make my dear brother your husband without seeing me racked by jealousy, as would surely be the case if you should prefer him to me in the lifetime of us both. After all, such a preference would appear to me quite natural, for perhaps he is a better man than I am—" etc.

"MARIE-PAUL."

"Here is the other," she said, with a charming color in her cheeks.

"ANDERNACH.—*Before the Battle.*

"DEAR, KIND LAURENCE—I know that I am a sober, serious sort of chap, and that Marie-Paul, with his vivacity and good humor, is a great deal more likely to find favor in your eyes than I am. The day will come, sooner or later, when you will have to choose between us: well, although I love you with an affection—"

"You were in correspondence with émigrés!" exclaimed Peyrade, interrupting the reading, and holding up the let.

ters between his eye and the light to see if there were not other matter interlined in sympathetic ink.

"Yes," returned Laurence, refolding the precious letters, now yellow with age. "But by what right do you thus violate my domicile, my personal liberty, and all the domestic virtues?"

"Ah! just so!" said Peyrade. "By what right, eh? We'll show you by what right, my pretty aristocrat," he continued, drawing from his pocket an order issued by the Minister of Justice and countersigned by the Minister of the Interior. "There, *citoyenne*, that is what the ministers evolved from under their nightcap."

"We might ask *you*," said Corentin, in a tone intended only for her ear, "by what right you harbor assassins of the First Consul on your premises. The cut across the knuckles that you gave me but now might justify me in some day lending a hand to send those young gentlemen your cousins to the scaffold—I who came here to serve them—"

Merely by the movement of his lips and by the look which Laurence gave Corentin, the curé understood what was said by the great unacknowledged *artiste*, and he made the Comtesse a cautionary signal that was seen only by Goulard. Peyrade was sounding the casket with his fingernails to see if it had not a false bottom.

"Oh! mon Dieu!" exclaimed Laurence, snatching the box from Peyrade, "do not break it—see here."

She took a pin and pressed it against the head of one of the carved figures: the two boards, moved by a spring, fell apart, and that which was hollow disclosed two miniatures of German workmanship painted on ivory, the likenesses of the two MM. de Simeuse in the uniform of Condé's army. Corentin, who found himself confronted by an adversary worthy of his steel, drew Peyrade by a gesture to a corner, and the pair conferred in private.

"You could throw that into the fire!" said the Abbé Goujet to Laurence, indicating by a glance the Marquise's letter and the locks of hair.



The young girl shrugged her shoulders significantly in reply. The curé understood that she had made that sacrifice of all that was dearest to her to amuse the spies and gain time, and cast his eyes upward in silent admiration.

"I hear Gothard crying. Where did they arrest him?" she asked in a tone loud enough to be heard by every one.

"I do not know," replied the curé.

"Had he gone to the farm?"

"The farm!" said Peyrade to Corentin. "It will be well to send a party up there."

"Not so," rejoined Corentin, "that girl would not have placed her cousins' fate in the keeping of a farmer. She is amusing us. Do as I bid you, so that, after having made the mistake of coming here, we may at least go away a little wiser than we were before."

Corentin came and stood before the fire, tucking up the long and pointed tails of his coat to warm his legs; his air, tone and manner were those of a man making a social visit.

"Mesdames, you are at liberty to seek your beds, as are the servants. Monsieur le Maire, we have no further need of your assistance. The strictness of our orders did not allow us to act otherwise than we have done; but when all the walls, which appear to be of considerable thickness, shall have been sounded and examined, we shall relieve you of our presence."

The mayor made his bow to the company and went his way. The curé and Mlle. Goujet manifested no intention of leaving. The servants could not make up their mind to go to bed without knowing more of how matters were to end for their young mistress. Mme. d'Hauteserre, who, ever since Laurence's arrival, had been scrutinizing her with the eager curiosity of a despairing mother, now rose, took her by the arm, led her to a corner, and in a low voice asked—

"Have you seen them?"

"How could I have allowed your boys to come under our roof without your knowing it?" Laurence answered.

"Durieu," she said, "go and see if there is a possibility of saving my poor Stella; she is breathing still."

"She has had a hard day's work, I suppose?" inquired Corentin.

"She covered fifteen leagues in three hours," she replied, addressing the curé, who looked at her with silent stupefaction. "I went out at half-past nine, and when I returned it was well after one."

She glanced at the clock, which told the hour to be half-past two.

"So," Corentin observed, "you do not deny that you have ridden fifteen leagues?"

"No," she replied. "I admit that my cousins and the MM. d'Hauteserre, in their entire innocence, were intending to petition not to be excepted from the amnesty, and were returning to Cinq-Cygne. And when I had reason to believe that the Sieur Malin was concocting some villanous, underhand scheme to injure them, I rode hard and fast to warn them to return to Germany, where they will be before the telegraph at Troyes can get word to the officials at the frontier. If I have committed a crime the law will punish me."

This answer, which had been thoroughly considered and was so consistent in all its parts, somewhat disturbed the convictions of the agent, whom the young Comtesse was observing out of the corner of her eye. At that critical moment, when every eye was bent with rapt attention on those two faces, when the glances of all were travelling back and forth, from Corentin to Laurence and from Laurence to Corentin, the sound of a horse approaching at a sharp gallop from the direction of the forest was heard upon the highway, and immediately afterward, the rider having turned in at the gate, upon the paved road that led across the lawn. All countenances wore an expression of poignant anxiety.

Peyrade entered the room, his eyes sparkling with joy. He strode hastily to his colleague's side and said to him, in

a voice sufficiently loud for the Comtesse to hear—"We have Michu!"

Laurence, to whose cheeks fatigue, suspense, and the terrible tension of all her mental faculties had given an unwonted rosy color, recovered her pallor and sank down in an almost fainting condition, as if a thunderbolt had fallen on her, upon a fauteuil. The Durieu woman, Mlle. Goujet and Mme. d'Hauteserre hastened to her side, for she seemed to be strangling; she motioned to them to cut the brandebourgs of her habit.

"She swallowed the bait—they are making for Paris," said Corentin to Peyrade. "We will modify our instructions accordingly."

They went out, leaving a gendarme at the door of the salon. The infernal cleverness of the two men had scored for them a horrible advantage in the contest; they had entrapped Laurence by means of one of their commonest stratagems.

At six o'clock in the morning, just as it was growing light, the two agents returned. After a careful examination of the sunken road, they pronounced it certain that horses had passed that way to enter the forest. They were waiting for the report of the captain of gendarmerie whose duty it was to reconnoitre the district. Leaving the chateau surrounded by a detachment commanded by a corporal, they went off to the village to get some breakfast at the inn-keeper's, first, however, having given orders to release Gothard, whose answer to every question put to him was still a flood of tears, and Catherine, who persevered in her attitude of silent immobility. Catherine and Gothard came to the salon and kissed the hands of their mistress, who lay stretched at length in her comfortable bergère. Durieu came in to announce that Stella would not die, but that she would need careful attendance.

The mayor, prowling about the village in an uneasy and inquiring frame of mind, fell in with Peyrade and Corentin. He would not hear of men of their condition breakfasting in



a dirty little village inn, and insisted on their going home with him. The abbey was distant a quarter of a league. As the three men were walking along the road toward their destination, Peyrade let fall the remark that the corporal from Arcis had not sent them any news of Michu and Violette.

"We have people of quality to deal with," said Corentin; "they are more than a match for us. I've no doubt that that priest knows more about the business than he would care to tell."

Mme. Goulard was just ushering the two employés into a great, bare, unwarmed dining-room when the lieutenant of gendarmerie, evidently laboring under considerable excitement, presented himself.

"We have just picked up the Arcis corporal's horse wandering in the forest without a rider," said he to Peyrade.

"Lieutenant," cried Corentin, "go with all speed to Michu's pavilion; find out what they are up to there! I am afraid the corporal has met with foul play."

These tidings had the effect of impairing the appetite of the participants in the mayor's hospitality. The Parisians bolted their food with the celerity of hunters taking their noonday snack, and were trundled back to the chateau in their "one-horse shay," in order that they might be on hand to respond promptly to any call for their services. When the two men next appeared in the salon, into which they had introduced trouble, terror, dismay, and so much mental anguish of every kind, they found there, grouped around the fire, and to appearance tranquil and unconcerned, Laurence in robe de chambre, the old gentleman and his wife, and the Abbé Goujet and his sister.

"If they had caught Michu," Laurence said to herself, "they would have brought him here. It is too bad that I could not have been more mistress of myself, that I had to help confirm those wretches in their suspicions; but it is not too late to mend matters.—Do you intend to keep us

prisoners much longer?" she asked the two detectives with a laughing, offhand air.

"How can she know anything of our apprehensions concerning Michu? No one from outside has found his way into the chateau. She is making game of us!" was the meaning of the glance exchanged by the two spies.

"We shall not bother you much longer," Corentin replied. "In three hours from now we expect to bid you good-by, with apologies for having disturbed your solitude."

There was no answer. This disdainful silence had the effect of redoubling Corentin's inward rage, as to whom Laurence and the curé, the two dominating intelligences of that little world, had been comparing notes. Gothard and Catherine drew up the table to the fire and set out the breakfast, of which the curé and his sister partook. Neither masters nor servants paid the least attention to the two spies, who went out and walked in the garden or on the road, occasionally revisiting the salon.

At half-past two o'clock the lieutenant returned.

"I found the corporal," he informed Corentin, "lying in the road that leads from the pavilion of Cinq-Cygne to the farm of Bellache; he was uninjured save for a dreadful contusion on the head, the result most likely of his fall. He was stripped off backward so suddenly from his horse and thrown to the ground so violently, he says, that he can give no explanation of how it happened; his feet lost the stirrups, otherwise he must have been killed; his maddened horse would have dragged him. We left him to the care of Michu and Violette—"

"What! you don't mean to tell me that Michu is at home?" queried Corentin, darting a look at Laurence.

The Comtesse smiled imperceptibly, like a woman enjoying her revenge.

"I just now saw him and Violette putting the finishing touches to a bargain that they began to discuss yesterday afternoon," replied the lieutenant. "They struck me as being pretty drunk, but that is not to be wondered at, for

they were drinking all night and have not yet reached an agreement."

"Did Violette tell you that?" cried Corentin.

"Yes," answered the lieutenant.

"Ah, to get a thing done one must do it himself!" exclaimed Peyrade, glancing at Corentin, who appeared no less than his colleague to distrust the lieutenant's sagacity. The younger man nodded assent to his senior's proposition.

"What o'clock was it when you reached Michu's pavilion?" Corentin inquired. He had noticed that Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne had glanced at the clock on the mantel-shelf.

"Two o'clock, or thereabout," replied the lieutenant.

Laurence cast a radiant look on M. and Mme. d'Hauteserre, the Abbé Goujet and his sister, to whom the sky just then appeared of a brighter azure; the joy of triumph sparkled in her eyes, her cheeks were rosy red, tears trembled on her lashes. This young girl, strong and brave in adversity, could weep only in her moments of pleasure. At that moment she was sublime, and especially for the curé, who, on most occasions repelled by the excessive virility of Laurence's character, now discerned in it all the tenderness of the true woman; but that sensibility, which she kept locked so closely in her heart, was like a treasure deep-buried in the earth under a block of granite.

A gendarme appeared to inquire if admittance should be given to Michu's son, who was there with a message from his father for the gentlemen from Paris. Corentin nodded his head affirmatively. François Michu, that precocious youngster in whom thus early traits of the paternal cunning and astuteness were developing, was in the courtyard, where Gothard, now in the enjoyment of his liberty once more, was enabled to have a moment's converse with him under the eye of the gendarme. One portion of his commission the sharp little Michu successfully acquitted himself of by slipping something into Gothard's hand unperceived by the gendarme. Gothard followed in the wake of François when the latter was summoned to the salon



and, approaching Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne, innocently delivered her wedding ring to her, entire, which she kissed devoutly, for she knew that it was Michu's purpose, in sending her that token, to convey to her the information that the four gentlemen were in safety.

"My pa wants to know what he is to do with the officer man, who is very sick?"

"What ails him?" inquired Peyrade.

"Dunno; somethin' the matter with his head, I guess; had a tumble off his horse. For a gindarme, who is s'posed to know how to ride, that don't look very well, but I s'pose his horse must 'a' stumbled. He's got a hole in the back of his head, oh, a hole as big as your fist! Seems as if he must 'a' fallen on a rock. Poor man! he may be a gindarme, he suffers all the same. I couldn't bear to look at him."

The captain of the Troyes gendarmerie came riding into the courtyard, dismounted, and beckoned to Corentin, who, as soon as he recognized him, hurried to the window and threw it up in order to save time.

"What is it?"

"We have come back like a pack of Dutchmen! Right in the middle of the great avenue of the forest we came on the carcasses of five horses that had been ridden to death, that had dropped from exhaustion; their hides were a reeking lather of sweat. I gave directions not to bury them until we have ascertained where they came from and who furnished them. The forest is surrounded, and those who are inside will have to stay there, for they cannot get out."

"At what hour do you suppose those riders entered the forest?"

"About half-past twelve."

"I don't want so much as a rabbit to leave this forest unseen!" said Corentin to the officer. "I will leave Peyrade with you; I am going now to see the poor corporal. —Remain for a while with the mayor," he added, for the ear of the Provençal. "I will send a capable man to relieve

you. We shall need the assistance of the people of the neighborhood; scan all their faces carefully."

He turned to the company, and in a voice that boded no good exclaimed:

"*Au revoir!*"

No one rose or saluted the agents as they retired.

"What do you suppose Fouché will say to a domiciliary visit that ended in nothing?" Peyrade asked as he assisted Corentin to his place in the ramshackle cabriolet.

"Oh! the end is not yet," Corentin replied; "the gentlemen must be in the forest."

He glanced up at Laurence, who was watching them through the small panes of the great window of the salon.

"I made one woman eat humble pie who had stirred my bile overmuch, and she was every bit as good as this minx. See if I don't make her pay for that cut of the whip if she ever crosses my path again!"

"The other woman was a *fille*," remarked Peyrade, "and this one is of a station—"

"What difference does that make? All are fish that swim in the sea!" Corentin replied, motioning to the gendarme who was driving to lay the lash on the skeleton post-horse.

Ten minutes later the chateau of Cinq-Cygne was entirely and completely evacuated.

"How was it managed, the affair of the gendarme?" Laurence asked François Michu, whom she had seated at the table and was regaling with sundry dainties.

"Father and mother told me that no one was to be allowed in our house, that it was a matter of life and death. So, when I heard horses running and rampaging in the wood, I knew that there were some of those dogs of gendarmes about, and made up my mind that they should stay away from our house. I went up to the garret and got a stout rope that we had there, came down, and tied it firmly to one of the trees that grow by the roadside. Then I drew taut the cord until it was breast-high to a man on horseback,

and made fast the other end to another tree directly opposite the first; this was on the road where I had heard horses galloping. The way was barred. My plan did not miscarry. There was no moon, my corporal took a tumble, but was not killed. What would you have? They're hard to kill, gendarmes! Well, there's no use repining; one can't do more than one can."

"You have been our salvation!" said Laurence, embracing the little peasant boy, with whom she walked as far as the park gate.

There, after she had assured herself that there was no one near, she asked in a whisper—

"Have they anything to eat?"

"I have just taken them a twelve-pound loaf and four bottles of wine. They are to lie quiet for six days."

On her return to the salon the young girl found herself the object of the mute questioning of M. and Mme. d'Hauteserre and the curé and his sister, who eyed her with equal admiration and anxiety.

"Have you seen them?" cried Mme. d'Hauteserre.

The Comtesse smiled and laid a finger on her lips, then left the room to go upstairs to bed, for her fatigue made itself felt now that victory was assured.

The most direct route from Cinq-Cygne to Michu's pavilion was by the road that led from the village to the farm of Bellache, and which terminated in the round-point where the spies had appeared to Michu on the preceding day. Owing to this reason the gendarme who was acting as Co-rentin's coachman pursued this route, which was the same that the Areis corporal had followed. As they drove along the agent was on the lookout for indications that might shed some light on the manner of the corporal's mysterious overthrow. He took himself to task for having sent only one man to cover a point of such importance, and from this error of judgment deduced an axiom for a code of rules that he was composing for his guidance.

"If they disposed of the gendarme," he reflected, "they



won't have hesitated to rid themselves of Violette as well. It is plain that the five dead horses served to bring the four conspirators and Michu back from the environs of Paris to the forest.—Has Michu a horse?" he inquired of the gendarme, who belonged to the Arcis brigade.

"Ah! and a famous one at that," replied the gendarme, "a hunter from the stables of the *ci-devant* Marquis de Simeuse. He is rising fifteen, but he's none the worse for it. Michu will ride him twenty leagues, and bring him in with a coat as dry as my hat. Oh! he sets great store by the animal; he has refused big money for him."

"What sort of a looking animal is it?"

"Dark brown in color, verging on black, with spots of white about the fetlocks, lean, wiry, small-boned, all sinews, like an Arab."

"You know something of Arab horses?"

"I am only a year back from Egypt, where many a time I've straddled the mounts of the Mamelukes. I have seen eleven years' service in the cavalry. I was on the Rhine with General Steingel, from there to Italy, and I followed the First Consul to Egypt. I expect to be promoted corporal before long."

"While I am inside Michu's pavilion do you go and take a peep into the stable; if, as you assert, you served eleven years in the cavalry, you should be able to tell when a horse has been violently exercised."

"Look, there's where our corporal got his fall," said the gendarme, pointing to the spot where the road debouched into the round-point.

"You may tell the captain to join me at the pavilion; we will be company for each other back to Troyes."

Corentin got down and devoted several minutes to an observation of the ground. He gave special attention to the two tall elms that stood opposite each other, one close up against the park wall, the other on the slope of the round-point at the spot where the vicinal road intersected it; then his keen eyes detected something that had escaped the no-

tice of all who passed that way—a brass button off a uniform coat, lying half hidden in the dust of the road; he stooped and picked it up. On entering the pavilion he saw Violette and Michu seated at the table in the kitchen, still engaged in their interminable wrangle. Violette rose, saluted Corentin, and invited him to drink.

"Thanks—I wish to see the corporal," said the young man, whose knowledge of such matters told him that Violette had been drunk for more than twelve hours.

"My wife is tending him upstairs," said Michu.

"Well, corporal, how are you getting on?" asked Corentin, who ran up the stairs and found the gendarme lying on Mme. Michu's bed, his head swathed with compresses.

His hat, belts and sabre were on a chair. Marthe, faithful to her woman's instinct and entirely ignorant, moreover, of her son's exploit, was nursing the corporal, assisted by her mother.

"We are expecting M. Varlet, the doctor from Arcis," said Mme. Michu. "Gaucher has gone for him."

"Leave us a moment, if you please," Corentin requested, not a little surprised by what he saw, proving as it did conclusively the innocence of the two women. "How were you attacked?" he asked, examining the uniform coat.

"In the chest," replied the corporal.

"Let's see your belts."

On the wide band of yellow leather with edges bound with white which a recent law, extremely minute and precise as to every little detail, had given to the so-styled "National" gendarmerie, was a large brass plate, in appearance not unlike the belt-plate worn by the gardes champêtres of the present day, and on which the law had directed should be engraved this remarkable device, "Respect for persons and property!" The rope had necessarily defaced the belt considerably at the point of contact. Corentin held up the coat and looked for the place of the absent button that he had found in the road.

"What time was it when they picked you up?" he asked.

"Not long after daybreak, I think."

"And did they bring you up here immediately?" Co-rentin inquired, remarking the condition of the bed, which showed no signs of disorder.

"Yes."

"Who brought you up?"

"The woman, assisted by the Michu boy, who discovered me when I was unconscious."

"Good! they never went to bed," said the agent to himself. "It was not a shot from a gun or pistol that disabled the corporal, nor was it a blow from a bludgeon, for his adversary, to strike at him, must have been on the same level, must have been on horseback; consequently it must have been an obstacle thrown across his way that did the mischief. A wooden bar? Impossible. An iron chain? It would have left marks.—What did you feel?" he asked the corporal, coming to the bedside to note his expression.

"I was thrown from my saddle so suddenly—"

"You have an abrasion of the skin under the chin."

"It seems to me I remember something of a rope being drawn across my face," replied the corporal.

"I have it!" exclaimed Co-rentin. "Somebody stretched a rope across the road between two trees."

"That may well be," rejoined the corporal.

Co-rentin went downstairs and entered the living-room.

"Come, you old rogue, let's bring the matter to a close!" said Michu, speaking to Violette and looking at the detective. "Only a hundred and twenty thousand francs, that's all, and my property is yours. I will put the money out at interest and be a *rentier*."

"So help me God, all I've got is sixty thousand."

"But don't I offer to give you time for the balance? Here we've been chaffering since yesterday, and are as far as ever from an agreement! Land of the very first quality!"



"I've nothing against the land," Violette rejoined.

"More wine, wife!" shouted Michu.

"Don't you think you've had enough?" exclaimed Marthe's mother. "This makes fourteen bottles since nine o'clock yesterday."

"You have been here since nine o'clock this morning?" said Corentin to Violette.

"Excuse me, sir, no, sir; I haven't once left the house since early yesterday evening, and I'm none the richer for it; the more he makes me drink the higher he puts the price of his property."

"That's a correct principle of trade; you give the price a hoist every time you hoist the elbow," observed Corentin.

A dozen empty bottles, drawn up in platoons at the end of the table, attested the correctness of the old lady's computation. At that moment the gendarme signalled from outside for Corentin to come to him, and on the latter appearing on the doorstep said in his ear:

"There is no horse in the stable."

Corentin re-entered and resumed his seat. "Your little boy will not be long away, I suppose," he said; "you probably sent him to the city on your horse?"

"No, Monsieur," spoke up Marthe, "he went on foot."

"Well, then, what have you done with your horse?"

"Lent him," Michu shortly answered.

"Come this way, my apostolic friend," said Corentin, addressing the foreman, "I have a couple of words that I want to whisper in your ear."

Michu and the detective left the room.

"The bullet we saw you putting in that rifle yesterday was intended for the Councillor of State.—Grévin, the notary, saw you, but you could not be convicted on his unsupported testimony. There was abundance of good intention on your side, but a scarcity of witnesses on ours. I don't know how you did it, but you put Violette to sleep, and you, your wife and little boy, instead of going to bed and sleeping the sleep of peaceable, law-abiding citizens, spent

your night scouring the country with intent to warn Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne of our arrival and assist in the spiriting away of her cousins, whom you have brought here and concealed somewhere in the neighborhood, exactly where I have not yet found out. Your wife or your son, one or the other of them, unhorsed the corporal and broke his head, and did it, I am free to confess, in a very workman-like manner. In short, you have shown yourself one too many for us. You are a dandy, a chap after my own heart. But the game is not ended yet; we shall have our innings. Would you like to treat with us? It will be to the advantage of your masters."

"Come this way, where we can talk without fear of eavesdroppers," said Michu, conducting the spy into the park until they came to the pond.

When Corentin set eyes on the expanse of water he looked steadily at Michu, who was doubtless counting on his herculean strength to hurl his man into three feet of water with seven feet of underlying mud. Michu answered his look with another of equal steadiness. It was like some great cold-blooded, slimy, dull-eyed boa and a lithe and graceful jaguar of Brazil exchanging glances of defiance.

"Thank you, I am not thirsty just at present," replied the *muscadin*, who remained at the edge of the meadow, while his hand sought the little poniard that he carried in the side-pocket of his coat.

"We are not likely to agree," Michu observed with an indifferent air.

"I would advise you to be particularly circumspect in your language and actions, my dear friend; the eye of Justice will be on you."

"I hope she is less dull of vision than you are, otherwise everybody will be in peril," rejoined the foreman.

"You decline my proposal, then?" Corentin asked in a meaning tone.

"I would go to the guillotine a hundred times over, if it were possible for a man to have his head cut off a hundred

times, rather than have dealings with such an infernal scoundrel as you are!"

Corentin gave a parting glance at Michu, the pavilion, and Couraut, who growled at him, and leaped nimbly to his seat in the cabriolet. He issued a few orders as he passed through Troyes, and returned to Paris. All the brigades of gendarmerie received a standing order and secret instructions.

During the months of December, January and February active and incessant perquisitions were carried on in the smallest and remotest villages. Every little wine-shop had its spy. Corentin acquired three valuable pieces of information; a horse resembling Michu's was found dead not far from Lagny. The five horses buried in the forest of Nodemesme had been sold, for a consideration of five hundred francs each, by certain farmers and millers to a man who, from the description given of him, could have been no other than Michu. Upon the passage of the law relative to abettors of conspiracy and Cadoudal's accomplices, Corentin restricted his surveillance to the forest of Nodemesme, and later, after the arrest of Pichegru, Moreau and the Royalists, there were no more strange faces seen in the neighborhood. About that time Michu lost his place. The notary of Arcis showed him the letter in which the Councillor of State, lately raised to the dignity of Senator, requested Grévin to audit the foreman's accounts and notify him of his discharge. Within three days Michu received a formal acquittance and was a free man once more. Considerably to the astonishment of his neighbors, he went to live at Cinq-Cygne, where Laurence engaged him to superintend all the outlying farms of the chateau. It was not a good omen that he entered on his new functions coincidently with the execution of the Duc d'Enghien. The same issue of the newspapers throughout almost the whole of France contained the particulars of the Prince's arrest, trial, condemnation and death—a terrible reprisal which preceded the trials of Polignac, Rivière and Moreau.



## II

## CORENTIN'S RETURN INNINGS

*W*HILE awaiting the completion of the house that was being built for him, Michu occupied rooms over the stables, not far from the gap that has figured in this history. He purchased two horses, one for himself and one for his son, for they both united with Gothard in escorting Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne in her rides about the country, the chief object of which was, as may be imagined, to watch over the safety of the four gentlemen and see that they wanted for nothing. François and Gothard, assisted by Couraut and the dogs of the Comtesse's pack, acted as scouts to see that no suspicious-looking person approached the hiding-place in the wood. Laurence and Michu brought the recluses victuals which, in order that the secret might be confined to the smallest possible number of persons, were prepared by Marthe, her mother and Catherine, for they were all morally certain that there were spies in the village. And, from prudential motives, these relief expeditions were never sent out oftener than twice in the week, sometimes by day, sometimes by night, and never at the same hour. These precautions were observed during the pendency of the Rivière, Polignac and Moreau trials. When the *senatus-consultum* that summoned the Bonaparte family to the Empire and made Napoleon Emperor was submitted to the vote of the French people, M. d'Hauteserre signed the register that Goulard brought to him at the chateau. Not long afterward it became known that the Pope was to come all the way from Rome to assist at the coronation of Napoleon, and thereon Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne withdrew her opposition to her cousins and the young d'Hauteserres petitioning to have their names struck off the list of émigrés and be re-

stored to their civil rights. The old gentleman hurried off to Paris, where his first business was to call on the *cidevant*, Marquis de Chargebœuf, a friend and intimate of M. de Talleyrand. That minister, then high in his master's favor, transmitted the petition to Josephine, and Josephine handed it to her husband, whom, although the result of the popular vote was not yet ascertained, it was the fashion to address as "Sir" and "Your Majesty." M. de Chargebœuf, M. d'Hauteserre, and the Abbé Goujet, who had also come up to Paris, were admitted to an interview with Talleyrand, and that minister promised them his support. Napoleon had already graciously pardoned the chief actors in the great Royalist conspiracy; but, although the four gentlemen were only objects of suspicion, at the close of the *séance* of the Council of State the Emperor summoned to his cabinet Senator Malin, Fouché, Talleyrand, Cambacérès, Lebrun, and Dubois, the Prefect of Police.

"Messieurs," said the future Emperor, who still wore the uniform prescribed for a first consul, "we have received from the Sieurs de Simeuse and d'Hauteserre, officers in the army of the Prince de Condé, a petition requesting that they be allowed to return to France."

"They are there now," said Fouché.

"As are a thousand others whom I see every day in Paris," rejoined Talleyrand.

"I do not think you can have seen these gentlemen," Malin replied, "for they are in hiding in the forest of Nodessme, where they consider themselves at home."

He took good care not to repeat to the First Consul and Fouché the words to which he had owed his life, but, using Corentin's reports to support his position, he convinced the council of the four gentlemen's participation in the conspiracy of MM. de Rivière and de Polignac, mentioning Michu as their accomplice. The Prefect of Police confirmed the Senator's statements.

"But how could this man of so humble a condition have

known of the discovery of the conspiracy at a time when the only persons in the secret were the Emperor, his council, and myself?" asked the Prefect of Police.

Dubois' question passed unheeded.

"If they are concealed in a forest where you have not been able to find them after a seven months' hunt," said the Emperor to Fouché, "I think they have pretty well expiated their offence!"

"That those men are my enemies," said Malin, alarmed by the Prefect's perspicacity, "is sufficient reason why I should try to imitate your Majesty's clemency: I therefore constitute myself their advocate, and ask that their names be taken off the lists."

"They will be less dangerous to you reintegrated than as émigrés," observed Fouché, "scrutinizing Malin's face, "for they will be sworn to support the constitution of the Empire and obey the laws."

"In what respect are they a menace to the Senator?" asked Napoleon.

Talleyrand conversed for some time with the Emperor in an undertone. It seemed as if all obstacles were removed, and that the petition of the Simeuses and d'Hauteserres would be granted.

"Sire," said Fouché, "you may hear from those gentlemen again some day."

Talleyrand, at the solicitation of the Duc de Grandlieu, speaking in behalf of the young gentlemen, had given their "word of honor as a gentleman"—a locution that always had a particularly imposing effect upon Napoleon—that their submission was made in good faith, without equivocation or mental reservation, and that they would never undertake anything against the Emperor.

"MM. d'Hauteserre and de Simeuse, after recent occurrences, do not care to bear arms longer against their country. They are not exactly in sympathy with the imperial government, and are of that order of men whom your Majesty will do well to propitiate; but they will be con-



tent to live on French soil and obey the laws," said the Minister.

And he took out and handed to the Emperor for his perusal a letter that he had received, the tenor of which confirmed his spoken words.

"Where there is so much frankness there cannot be insincerity," said the Emperor, glancing at Cambacérès and Lebrun. Then, turning to Fouché, "Do you still object?" he asked.

"In your Majesty's interest," replied the future Minister of Police, "I request to be allowed to notify the gentlemen of their reinstatement, *when it shall be definitively accorded*," he added, emphasizing his concluding words.

"Be it so," said Napoleon, observing the troubled expression of Fouché's countenance.

The little council came to an end, apparently without the subject of discussion having been decided; but it resulted in planting in Napoleon's mind a germ of distrust as to the four gentlemen. M. d'Hauteserre, who was assured of their success, had written home a letter in which he announced the joyful tidings. The inmates of Cinq-Cygne were not greatly surprised, therefore, when, a few days later, Goulard appeared and informed Laurence and Mme. d'Hauteserre that they were to send the four gentlemen to Troyes, where the prefect, after they should have taken the oath of adhesion and fidelity to the Empire and the laws, would deliver to them the decree by virtue of which they would be reinstated in all their rights, privileges and possessions. Laurence said to the mayor that she would take steps to notify her cousins and the MM. d'Hauteserre.

"They are not here, then?" queried Goulard.

Mme. d'Hauteserre looked anxiously at the young lady, who presently left the room to go and confer with Michu. Michu could see no impediment to immediately releasing the émigrés from durance. Laurence, Michu, his son, and Gothard accordingly set out for the forest on horseback, taking with them a led horse, for the Comtesse was to ride

with the four gentlemen to Troyes and return with them. All the servants who were so lucky as to hear the glorious news assembled on the lawn to witness the departure of the joyous cavalcade. The four young men came forth from their dungeon, got on their horses unseen by any prying eye, and took the road for Troyes, accompanied by Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne. Michu, assisted by Gothard and his son, replaced the stones over the entrance of the vault, and the three of them returned on foot. They had not gone a great way, however, before Michu remembered that he had not brought away the silver table utensils that his masters had been using; he went back alone to secure them. He was near the bank of the pond when he heard voices in the crypt, and made directly for the entrance, pushing his way through the underbrush.

"I suppose you've come back to get your silverware?" It was Peyrade who spoke, smiling on him amiably, his big red nose gleaming through the foliage.

Without knowing why, for the young men were out of danger, Michu felt as if each and every joint in his body was racked and twisted by unendurable pain, so vivid in him at that moment was that vague, inexplicable sensation of dread that is inspired by the premonition of approaching disaster. None the less, however, he continued to press on, and on the steps encountered Corentin, carrying a candle in his hand.

"There is nothing mean about us," said he to Michu; "we might have pinched your *ci-devants* a week ago, but we knew they were in process of purging themselves of their sins. You are a tough customer! but you surely won't object to our satisfying our curiosity a bit, after all the trouble and worry you have caused us."

"I wouldn't mind paying something handsome," Michu exclaimed, "to find out how and by whom we were sold out the way we were."

"If that is what is bothering you, my boy," Peyrade replied with a smile, "look at your horses' shoes; you will see that it was you who gave yourselves away."

"No offence, I hope," said Corentin, motioning to the captain of gendarmerie to bring up the horses.

"I see how it was!" cried Michu. "That miserable Parisian farrier, who used to shoe the horses so scientifically in English style, and is no longer in Cinq-Cygne, was in league with them! All they had to do was to wait for a rainy day, and then, when the roads were soft, send out their spies in the disguise of woodcutters or poachers to follow our trail, easily recognizable by the horses' distinctive toe-calks. We are quits."

Michu comforted himself with the reflection that the discovery of the hiding-place was no longer a source of danger, now that the gentlemen had regained their freedom and were French citizens once more. And yet, he had abundant reason for his presentiments, if he had but known it. The police have this virtue in common with the Jesuits—they never lose sight either of a friend or of an enemy.

Old M. d'Hauteserre returned from Paris, and was considerably surprised that he was not the first to communicate the joyful tidings. Durieu prepared the most appetizing of dinners. The servants dressed themselves in their best, and all hands impatiently awaited the arrival of the prodigals, who made their appearance about four o'clock, glad, though somewhat sheepish, for they were to be subject for two years to police surveillance, and during that time were to reside within the limits of their commune and report themselves monthly at the prefecture.

"I will send you the register to sign," the prefect had said to them, "and later, in the course of a few months, you can apply for a modification of the offensive conditions, which, however, are not more rigorous than those imposed on all of Pichegru's accomplices. I will report favorably on your application."

These restrictions, not entirely unmerited, exercised a somewhat depressing effect on the young men. Laurence laughed at them.

"The Emperor of the French," said she, "is an upstart



without breeding; he has not yet learned how to pardon gracefully."

The gentlemen found at the gate all the inmates of the chateau, and scattered along the roadside a good part of the people of the village, assembled for a glimpse of the young men whose adventures were the talk of the department. Mme. d'Hauteserre displayed a tear-stained face as she clasped her boys in a long embrace; she could say nothing, and sat, during the greater part of the evening, silent but supremely happy. As soon as the de Simeuse twins appeared in sight and got off their horses, there was a universal cry of surprise elicited by their extraordinary resemblance: their features, voice, expression, gestures, manners, were absolutely identical. In dismounting, their manner of rising in the saddle, flinging their leg over the horse's croup, and throwing the reins to the attendant, was as like as two peas. Their dress, too, identical down to the smallest detail, led the beholder to take them for veritable Menechmi. They wore boots à la Suwaroff, fitting snug to the instep, skin-tight trousers of white buckskin, green shooting-jackets with metal buttons, black cravats, and deerskin gloves. Those two young men, at that time thirty-one years old, were, to use a current expression of the day, charming cavaliers. Of medium height, but athletic and well-proportioned, their eyes, set off by a fringe of long curved lashes, were as limpid and lustrous as a child's, their hair was black as the raven's wing, their forehead high and commanding, their complexion a pale, transparent olive. Their voice was as gentle as a woman's, and when they spoke the words dropped graciously from their full red lips. Their manners, more elegant and polished than those generally seen in country gentlemen, announced that acquaintance with men and things had given them that second education which is even more essential than the first to a man who would be "accomplished." As, thanks to Michu, they had not wanted for money during the days of their emigration, they had been enabled to travel, and were

kindly received at various foreign courts. The Abbé and the old gentleman considered their manner a little stiff and haughty, but that, situated as they were, may have been ascribable to a sense of personal dignity. They possessed all the minutiae, all the small graces and accomplishments that are the result of a finished education, and were of more than ordinary address in all the exercises of the body. The only dissimilarity that might have served to differentiate them was one of an intellectual order. The younger pleased by his gayety as much as did the elder by his melancholy; but this contrast, of a purely moral nature, only became perceptible after a long acquaintance.

"Ah! my lass," said Michu apart to Marthe, "how could one help loving those two young men?"

Marthe, who admired the twins in her capacity both as woman and as mother, assented with an emphatic nod, and squeezed her husband's hand. Permission was accorded the servants to embrace their new masters.

During the seven months of their self-imposed imprisonment, the four young men had several times committed the somewhat necessary imprudence of sallying forth from their cavern for exercise, always attended and closely guarded by Michu, his son, and Gothard. During these promenades, generally taken on fine moonlit nights, Laurence, comparing the past and present of their common life, had felt how impossible it was to choose between the two brothers. She loved the twins with a pure and equal love; it seemed to her sometimes that she must have two hearts. And on their side the two Pauls had not dared to speak to each other of a rivalry that might break forth at any time. Perhaps all three had tacitly agreed to leave the decision to chance. Her then frame of mind doubtless influenced Laurence, for she ended a moment of visible hesitation by giving an arm to each of the brothers, and in that manner passing into the salon, whither she was followed by M. and Mme. d'Hauteserre, who had taken possession of and were questioning their sons. At that moment the assembled

servants raised a shout—"Long live the Cinq-Cygnés and Simeuses!"

Laurence turned about, still standing between the two brothers, and made a graceful gesture of acknowledgment.

When those nine persons came to take note of one another—for at every reunion, even in the bosom of the family circle, there always comes a moment when we look about us to see what changes time and absence have wrought in our friends—at the very first look that Adrien d'Hauteserre gave Laurence, and which was intercepted by his mother and the Abbé Goujet, it struck them that the young man was in love with the Comtesse. Adrien, the younger of the two d'Hauteserres, was of a tender and impressionable nature. His heart had remained young, notwithstanding the vicissitudes that had tried his manhood. The timidity that is so charming in youth he felt as an oppressive burden, resembling in this many soldiers, in whom long-continued familiarity with danger has left the heart virgin. He was altogether different from his brother, whose appearance lacked refinement, who was an ardent sportsman and a dauntless warrior, abounding in courage and resolution, but of a gross, animal nature, and deficient alike in quickness of intelligence and delicacy in matters of the heart. One was all soul, the other all action, but they both possessed in the same degree that sense of honor which is the essential characteristic of the gentleman. Small of stature, dark, lean and bony, Adrien d'Hauteserre somehow impressed one as being a man of great strength, while his brother, pale, tall and fair, appeared weak. Adrien was of a nervous temperament, his strength was in his soul; Robert, although lymphatic, found pleasure in demonstrating his purely physical prowess. Exceptional cases like this are found not infrequently in families, and it might prove an interesting study to trace their causes; but this narrative can only concern itself with them so far as to explain why Adrien had no reason to fear a rival in his brother. Robert entertained for Laurence the affection of a



blood relation, and the respect due from one of gentle birth to a young girl of his own caste. In the matter of sentiment, the elder brother belonged to that school of men who consider woman as man's adjunct and dependant, regarding her simply as an instrument for procreating children, and demanding from her all manner of perfections, physical, mental and moral, for which they allow her no share of credit. According to their doctrines, to recognize the equality of woman in a social, political or domestic sense would be equivalent to destroying the foundations of society. So far are we removed to-day from those venerable opinions of the primitive races that almost all women, including those who reject the dangerous liberty offered them by innovating sects, can afford to laugh at them; but Robert d'Hauteserre was so unfortunate as to be of that way of thinking. Robert represented the Middle Ages, the younger, the *cadet*, was a man of the present generation. These points of difference, instead of estranging the two brothers, had, on the contrary, cemented their affection. Even as early as that first evening these subtle distinctions were detected and appreciated by the curé, Mme. d'Hauteserre and Mlle. Goujet, who, apparently intent on their game of boston, saw promise of trouble in the future.

At the age of twenty-three Laurence, after the reflections of solitude and the bitterness of seeing her ambitious schemes irremediably ruined, once more become a woman, felt an irresistible craving for affection; she displayed all the graces of her intellect, she was charming. She revealed the charms of her tenderness with the naïveté of a child of fifteen. During the thirteen preceding years Laurence had been a woman only because she suffered; she determined now to make up for the lost time, so she showed herself as coquettish, as capable of loving, as heretofore she had been great and strong. The four old people, who remained in the salon after the others had left, were not a little disquieted by this unwonted behavior of the charming girl. To what intensity might not passion attain in a young

person of such nobility and force of character? The two brothers loved the same woman equally and with blind tenderness. On which of the two would Laurence's choice alight? And would not the preference accorded to one mean the other's death? A Comtesse in her own right, she would bring to her husband a title and splendid privileges, a noble name made illustrious by a long line of ancestors; perhaps the Marquis de Simeuse, reflecting on these advantages, would sacrifice his own passion and bestow Laurence on his brother, who, according to the provisions of the old law, would be a simple private citizen, without title or estates. But would the cadet consent to be a party to such a sacrifice on his brother's part? This combat of love, when carried on at a distance, had not been attended by many disadvantages, and then, too, so long as the brothers were exposed to the vicissitudes of a soldier's life, the hazard of battle might at any moment solve the difficulty; but what was likely to ensue upon their reunion? When Marie-Paul and Paul-Marie, both of an age when the passions rage with their fiercest intensity, should have to share between them their cousin's thoughts, looks, words and attentions, was there not a likelihood of there springing up between them a jealousy of which the consequences might be most deplorable? Where then would be the happy existence of the twins, so devoted to each other, so actuated by similarity of thought and impulse? To these various suppositions, put forth one by one during the concluding game of boston, Mme. d'Hauteserre made answer that she did not believe Laurence would marry one of her cousins. The old lady had been visited in the course of the evening by one of those indefinable presentiments which are a secret between mothers and God. Laurence, in her heart of hearts, was no less terrified by the prospect of living in unrestricted intimacy with her cousins. The stirring drama of the conspiracy, the dangers daily incurred by the twin brothers, the sufferings endured by them during their emigration, all these were now succeeded by another drama to which she

had never given thought. This generous girl could not take refuge in the drastic alternative of marrying neither of the twins; her nature was too true, too honest to permit of her marrying while preserving in her heart an irresistible passion for another. To remain unmarried, to exhaust her cousins' patience by withholding her decision, and finally to accept as her husband that one of them who remained faithful to her in spite of her caprices, was a way out of the difficulty that occurred to her from vague instinct rather than from reflection. As she dropped asleep, her last words to herself were that it would be best to leave to chance the decision of the affair. Chance is the providence of women in affairs of love.

The next morning Michu set out for Paris, whence he returned in the course of a few days, bringing with him four handsome horses for his new masters. The hunting season would open in six weeks, and the young Comtesse judiciously reflected that that engrossing occupation would relieve her of a portion of the difficulties of the tête-à-tête at the chateau. The effect that manifested itself first was unlooked for; it surprised the witnesses of those strange loves as much as it excited their admiration. Without the least premeditation, the two brothers strove with each other which should show himself most attentive and affectionate toward their cousin; the gratification of serving sufficed as their reward. Life between them and Laurence, now they were three, was as fraternal as it had been between them when they were two. Nothing could have been more natural. After so long an absence they felt the need of renewing acquaintance with their cousin, of knowing her thoroughly and making themselves known thoroughly to her, to the end that she might choose intelligently between them; and at this trying period they were sustained by that mutual affection which made their two lives one. As of old the eyes of a mother had been unable to distinguish the two brothers from each other, so it was now with the eyes of love. Laurence, in order to tell which was which and not



confound them, was obliged to furnish them with distinctive cravats, white for the elder, black for the younger. But for this perfect resemblance, this oneness of life which deceived everybody, such a situation would appear improbable. It is explicable only by the fact, which is one of those that one never believes until he sees them; and, when one has seen them, the intelligence is more nonplused to account for them than it was before at having to believe them. When Laurence spoke her voice reverberated in two equally loving and faithful hearts. Did she give utterance to some noble sentiment, ingenious idea, or pleasant conceit, her glance encountered the pleasure expressed by two other glances that followed her in all her movements, interpreted her slightest wish, and smiled on her always with ever varying expression, of vivacious gayety in one, of tender melancholy in the other. Their mistress's name was never mentioned without the two brothers experiencing that quickening of the pulses which, irradiating their faces, made them, as the Abbé Goujet said, almost sublime. Thus, for instance, if a glove or handkerchief were missing and was to be sought for, if it was a matter of one of those small attentions that it affords men such pleasure to render to the woman of their love, the elder, throwing on his cousin a touching look of mingled pride and pleading, would leave to his junior the gratification of performing the service. And the junior, not to be outdone in courtesy, would repay all debts of this kind with the utmost punctuality. This combat of generosity in a sentiment which is too frequently the means of reducing man to the jealous ferocity of the animal confounded all the ideas of the old folk who witnessed it.

Such trifling incidents as these often drew tears from the Comtesse's eyes. There is one sensation, mighty in the influence it exerts over certain gifted organizations, that may serve to give some idea of Laurence's emotions; the reader will understand if he will look back in memory and recall the perfect accord of two beautiful voices—those of *la Son-tag* and *la Malibran*, for instance—in some harmonious duo,

or the soft breathing of two perfectly attuned flutes performed on by virtuosi of genius, the melodious strains of which penetrate the soul like the sighs of a single impassioned being. Sometimes the curé, seeing the Marquis de Simeuse, ensconced in his fauteuil, cast one of his unfathomable and melancholy glances on his brother, laughing and chatting with Laurence, would say to himself, "There sits a man who is capable of a great act of renunciation"; but presently, looking at him again, he would detect in his eyes the gleam of the old, the invincible passion. As often as either of the twins found himself alone with Laurence, he might believe that he, and he only, had her love.

"It seems to me at such times that they are but one," said the Comtesse in reply to Abbé Goujet when he undertook to question her as to the condition of her heart.

Thereon the priest saw that coquetry was an element entirely absent from her nature. Laurence really did not believe that she was loved by two men.

"But, dear child," said Mme. d'Hauteserre one evening, whose son was wasting and pining in silence for love of Laurence, "some time you will have to make a choice!"

"Suffer us to be happy while we may," she replied. "God will protect us against ourselves!"

Adrien d'Hauteserre concealed within his bosom a jealousy that was consuming him, and, knowing how little ground he had to hope, said nothing of his torments. He was content with the happiness of seeing that charming creature, who, during the few months that the conflict lasted, shone with all her lustre. Aiming to please, she gave that attention to her person which women give when they are loved. She watched the fashions, and more than once ran up to Paris to make herself more beautiful with fine raiment or some novelty. Finally, to afford her cousins all the enjoyments of a home, of which they had been deprived for so long a time, she closed her ears to the vigorous remonstrances of her guardian and so altered and

arranged her chateau as to make it the most comfortable residence to be found at that time in all Champagne.

Robert d'Hauteserre understood nothing of this secret drama. He had not noticed his brother's love for Laurence. As for the young girl, he made a practice of bantering her on her coquetry, for he could distinguish no difference between that odious habit and the desire of pleasing; but he knew no better, and that was his way in all matters of sentiment, taste and civility. Whenever, therefore, the man of the Middle Ages came upon the stage, Laurence forthwith proceeded to make him, blissfully unconscious, the butt of the evening's entertainment; she provided amusement for her cousins by provoking Robert to discussion, by luring him on, step by step, to the very middle of the treacherous bog that swallows up stupidity and ignorance. She excelled in those witty mystifications which, to produce their entire effect, should leave the victim pleased and happy. During those serene days, however, the only period of real happiness that those three charming young people were to know, Robert, notwithstanding the rugged bluntness of his nature, never intervened between Laurence and the Si-meuses with a manly, outspoken word that might have decided the question. The sincerity of the two brothers impressed him deeply. Robert, no doubt, had a sort of glimmering perception of what it must cost a woman to manifest to one suitor evidences of affection which she withheld from the other or which must have distressed him, and how it was that one brother was made happy by the good that befell the other. This respect shown by the disrespectful Robert will help to elucidate the situation, which would certainly have been considered a privileged one in the ages of faith when the sovereign pontiff had authority to intervene to cut the Gordian knot in those rare phenomena, akin to the most impenetrable mysteries. The Revolution had rebaptized those hearts in the Catholic faith; religion, consequently, assisted to make the present crisis yet more terrible, for the grandeur of the situation increases with the



grandeur of the characters. Neither M. and Mme. d'Hauteserre nor the curé and his sister looked for anything vulgar or commonplace from Laurence and the two brothers.

This drama, which remained confined within the narrow limits of the family where every one observed its progress with silent interest, ran its course so slowly yet so swiftly, it brought in its train so many unlooked-for joys, small combats, preferences deceived, hopes raised only to be dashed to earth, answers postponed until the morrow, with their attendant uncertainty, doubt, suspense and disappointment, that the inmates of Cinq-Cygne allowed the coronation of the Emperor Napoleon to pass unnoticed. The pleasures of the chase, also, which, by fatiguing the body to its limit of endurance, discourage the mind from roaming among the dangerous steppes of revery, imposed a truce upon those passions. Neither Laurence nor her cousins had time or inclination to think of outside matters, for each day was filled for them with palpitating interest.

"Upon my word," Mlle. Goujet observed one evening, "among all those lovers I don't know which is most in love!"

Adrien was alone in the salon with the four card-players; he raised his eyes to their faces and turned very pale. Of late days the pleasure of seeing Laurence and hearing her voice had been all that kept him alive.

"I think," said the curé, "that the Comtesse, for a woman, loves with altogether the most abandon."

Laurence, the two brothers and Robert came in a few minutes later. The newspapers had just arrived. England, having witnessed the failure of the conspiracies attempted at home, was banding Europe together against France. The disaster of Trafalgar had shattered one of the most gigantic schemes ever conceived by human genius, by which the Emperor had intended to crush the English power as a reward to France for his election. The camp of Boulogne had been broken up. Napoleon, with an army, as was usually the case, inferior in numbers, was about to offer battle to Europe

on fields to which he was a stranger. The eyes of the whole world were fixed on the result of the campaign.

"Oh! he will go under, sure, this time," predicted Robert, folding up the newspaper.

"He has the entire strength of Russia and Austria opposed to him," said Marie-Paul.

"And the topography of Germany is unfamiliar to him," added Paul-Marie.

"Of whom are you speaking?" asked Laurence.

"Of the Emperor," replied the three gentlemen.

Laurence cast a look of disdain on her two lovers, which discomfited them but delighted Adrien. The unfavored suitor made a gesture of admiration, and the exultant look in his eyes said plainly enough that, as for him, all his thoughts were of Laurence.

"You see, his love has made him forget his hate," Abbé Goujet remarked in an undertone.

This was the first, the last and only word of reproach that the two brothers received; but they decided that they were inferior in love to their cousin, who, two months subsequently, only heard of the wonderful victory at Austerlitz through a discussion that old d'Hauteserre had with his sons. Faithful to his plan, the worthy man wished that his boys should apply for positions in the army; their old rank would doubtless be given them, and there would be plenty of opportunities to rise in their profession. But the party of out-and-out Royalism was in the ascendant at Cinq-Cygne. The four gentlemen and Laurence laughed at the prudent old man, who prognosticated future trouble. Perhaps prudence is not so much a virtue as a *sense* of the mind, if it is admissible to join those two words; but the day will undoubtedly come when physiologists and philosophers will admit that the senses are, so to speak, the outer envelope of a swift and penetrating action proceeding from the spirit.

Toward the end of February, 1806, after the signing of the treaty of peace between France and Austria, a relative,

who, at the time of their application to be restored to citizenship, had interested himself in behalf of the MM. de Simeuse, and was subsequently to give them still further proofs of his goodwill, the *ci-devant* Marquis de Chargebœuf, whose properties extended from the department of Seine-et-Marne to the department of the Aube, drove up one morning to Cinq Cygne in a sort of calèche called, in the familiar language of the time, a *berlingot*. When the shabby vehicle was seen coming up the avenue the inmates of the chateau, who were breakfasting, gave way to laughter; but on recognizing its occupant, whose bald head was seen protruding from between the leather curtains of the *berlingot*, M. d'Hauteserre announced his name, and all hands rose from table to go and extend a welcome to the head of the House of Chargebœuf.

"We did wrong in allowing him to anticipate us," said the Marquis de Simeuse to his brother and the young d'Hauteserres; "we should have gone long ago and paid him a visit of thanks."

The driver, a farmhand, evidently, in the attire of a peasant, thrust a carter's whip into a socket of untanned leather and jumped down to assist the Marquis to alight, but Adrien and the younger of the de Simeuses were too quick for him; they flung open the door and, deaf to the old fellow's protests, had him out in short order. It pleased the Marquis at all times and seasons to extol his yellow *berlingot* with its leather curtains as a most serviceable and comfortable vehicle. The driver, assisted by Gothard, had already unharnessed the pair of big, unwieldy, fat, sleek horses, to whom the plow was evidently quite as familiar as the *berlingot*.

"And the cold had no terrors for you? Why, you are a genuine knight of the days of chivalry!" said Laurence as, taking her aged relative by the arm, she conducted him to the salon.

"It is not for you to come and see an old chap like me," he good naturedly replied—which was his way of conveying a reproof to his youthful relations.



"I wonder what he wants here?" old d'Hauteserre asked himself.

M. de Chargebœuf, a well-preserved old gentleman of sixty-seven, in pale yellow small-clothes with a pair of shrunk shanks clothed with striped stockings, wore powder in his hair, a *crapaud*, and "pigeon wings." His huntsman's coat, of green cloth with gold buttons, was liberally befrogged with gold brandebourgs. His white waistcoat was stiff with magnificent embroideries of gold. These trappings, still much affected by men of a past generation, harmonized well with his face, which bore some resemblance to that of Frederick the Great. He never put on his three-cornered hat, in order not to impair the effect of a *démilune* described by a layer of powder on his cranium. His right hand rested on a stout cane with a hooked handle, and the grand air with which he carried hat and cane would not have shamed King Louis XIV. This eminently respectable person relieved himself of an outer garment of quilted silk and deposited himself upon a fauteuil, retaining between his knees his cocked hat and walking-stick in a pose, familiar to the beaux of the Court of Louis XV., which left the hands free to manipulate the snuff-box, an important requisite of a gentleman's toilet. So the Marquis presently dived down into his waistcoat pocket, protected by a flap gorgeously embroidered with golden arabesques, and produced a box of the most ornate and elaborate description. He abstracted a pinch for his own delectation, then, with a charming gesture accompanied by kindly looks, passed the box round for the refreshment of the company, and while so doing he observed the pleasure afforded by his visit. It seemed then to dawn on him why the young émigrés had not been more respectful in their treatment of him; he appeared to be saying to himself, "When one is in love, one does not pay visits."

"We shall have you with us for a few days, I trust?" said Laurence.

"I fear not," he replied. "If it were not for the various

events that have made us such strangers to each other for some time past—for I know that the few leagues which part us are as nothing to so intrepid a horsewoman as you—you would know, my dear child, that I have daughters and daughters-in-law, grandsons and granddaughters. All those people would be beside themselves with anxiety if I should fail to make my appearance this evening, and I have eighteen leagues to go!"

"You must have good horses," remarked the Marquis de Simeuse.

"Oh! I did not come from home this morning; I spent the night in Troyes, where I had business yesterday."

After the usual perfunctory inquiries as to the health of the Marquise de Chargebœuf, the children, and so forth—all those tiresome questions that politeness obliges us to ask though we feel not the slightest interest in the answers—it appeared to M. d'Hauteserre that the object of M. de Chargebœuf's visit was to urge his young kinsmen to commit themselves to no rash or imprudent policy. The times were greatly changed, the old marquis averred, and no one could predict to what heights the Emperor might rise.

"Oh!" Laurence exclaimed, "he will be a god."

The kindly old man spoke of the advisability of conceding something. M. d'Hauteserre, hearing him inculcate the necessity of submission with much more assurance and authority than he had ever ventured to infuse into his teachings, looked at his sons with an air almost of entreaty.

"Would you serve that man?" the Marquis de Simeuse asked M. de Chargebœuf.

"Yes, certainly, if the interests of my family required it."

In conclusion he made vague allusion to certain remote dangers that threatened, and on Laurence calling on him to be more explicit, he urged the four gentlemen to abstain from hunting and remain quietly at home.

"You still look on the domains of Gondreville as your property," he said, addressing the MM. de Simeuse, "and

by doing so you keep alive a terrible enmity. I see by your looks of astonishment that you are not aware that there is ill-feeling against you in Troyes, where your courage is not forgotten. People there take pleasure in telling how you eluded the researches of the police of the Empire, some applauding you for it, others condemning you as enemies of the Emperor. Some zealous partisans affect to wonder at Napoleon's clemency toward you. But all this is nothing. You fooled men who considered themselves shrewder than you, and men of low origin never forgive. Sooner or later justice—which in your department is the humble servant of your enemy Malin, the Senator, for he has placed his creatures everywhere, even on the bench—*his* justice, therefore, will be well pleased to find you implicated in some compromising affair. A peasant will question your right to cross his field, you will have loaded weapons with you, your tempers are not the mildest—trouble is never long in coming under such conditions. Situated as you are, you must be right a hundred times over not to be wrong. I do not speak as I do without a reason for it. The police has your arrondissement constantly under surveillance, and keeps a commissary in that little hole of an Arcis solely to protect the Senator of the Empire against your machinations. He is afraid of you, and makes no bones of saying so."

"If he says that, it is a vile slander!" cried the younger of the Simeuses.

"A slander! I believe it is, for my part. But what does the public believe? that is the question. Michu once pointed a gun at the Senator, and he has not forgotten it. Since your return the Comtesse has taken Michu into her service. For many people, and, in fact, for the greater part of the general public, Malin is in the right. You do not appreciate how delicate is the present position of the émigrés as regards those who are in possession of their property. The Prefect, a man of sense, had a couple of words to say to me yesterday about you that disturbed me. In fact, I should be glad if you were somewhere else than here."



These words were listened to with stupefaction. Marie-Paul rang the bell violently.

"Gothard," said he to the young man when he appeared, "go and tell Michu that I want him."

The ex-foreman of Gondreville was not long in making his appearance.

"Michu, my friend," the Marquis de Simeuse asked, "is it true that you attempted to kill Malin?"

"Yes, Monsieur le Marquis, and if he ever comes back here I will dog him—"

"Do you know that we are suspected of having placed you there to do the deed, and that my cousin, through taking you into her employ, is accused of being accessory to your design?"

"Good heavens!" cried Michu, "is there a curse upon me? Shall I never be able to rid you tranquilly of Malin?"

"No, my lad, no," replied Paul-Marie. "But you will have to leave the country and our service; we will care for you, we will put you in the way of adding to your fortune. Sell all your possessions here, turn everything into cash; we will send you to Trieste, to one of our friends, who has extensive business relations and will utilize your services until the prospect here is more encouraging for us all."

Tears rose to Michu's eyes, and he stood as if rooted to the floor.

"Were there any witnesses to the fact at the time you hid yourself to fire on Malin?" asked the Marquis de Chargebœuf.

"Grévin the notary was talking with him. It is owing to that circumstance that I did not kill him, and most fortunate it was that it happened so! Madame la Comtesse knows why," said Michu, looking at his mistress.

"But this Grévin was not the only one who knew of it?" suggested M. de Chargebœuf, who, although the interrogatory was confined to members of the family, appeared none too well pleased with it.

"That spy who came down here in those times for the

purpose of bedevilling my masters, he also knew about it," replied Michu.

M. de Chargebœuf rose as if to look out at the gardens and remarked:

"You seem to be getting Cinq-Cygne in shape?"

Then he left the room, followed by the two brothers and Laurence, who divined the intention of his question.

"You are as frank and generous as ever, and equally imprudent," the old man said to them. "It is perfectly natural that I should try to put you on your guard against a public rumor, *which must be a calumny*, but how do you back me up? You go straightway to work, in presence of a lot of people as weak and foolish as M. and Mme. d'Hauteserre and their sons, to show it is gospel truth!—Oh, young men! young men! you should leave Michu here, you are the ones who should go away, *you!* But in any case, if you remain in this neighborhood, write a note to the Senator, tell him that you have just heard through me of the rumors that are in circulation about your head farmer, and that you have discharged him."

"What, *we!*" exclaimed the two brothers—"we, write to Malin, our father's and mother's murderer, the man who shamelessly despoiled us of our fortune!"

"That is all perfectly true; but he is one of the most important personages about the Imperial court; he is king of your department."

"He who voted for the execution of Louis XVI. in case Condé's army should enter France, and if not for life imprisonment!" cried the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne.

"Who doubtless counselled the death of the Duc d'Enghien!" exclaimed Paul-Marie.

"Eh! very good; if you insist on recapitulating his titles of nobility," said M. de Chargebœuf, "he who pulled at Robespierre's coat-tails to help bring him down when he saw that his enemies were in the ascendant, he who would have voted for having Bonaparte shot if the 18th Brumaire had proved a failure, he who would bring back the Bour-

bons if he saw Napoleon's fortune deserting him—he, in short, whom the stronger will always find at his side, prepared to give the sword or pistol with which to despatch the adversary whom there is cause to fear! But, reason the more!"

"We are fallen low indeed!" said Laurence.

"Children," said the old Marquis de Chargebœuf, taking them by the hand and leading them apart to a grass-plot then powdered over with a light fall of snow, "I know that you will not receive in a friendly spirit the counsels of a man of some experience, but I feel it my duty to give them to you, and this is what I would do: I would select as mediator some honest old fellow—me, say, if you can find no better one—and instruct him to demand from Malin a million francs in return for a ratification of the sale of Gondreville.—Oh! he will agree to it, if the matter is only kept quiet. At the current price of government securities, you would have a snug little income of a hundred thousand livres, would purchase a nice estate in some other department of France, leave Cinq-Cygne to be administered by M. d'Hautesserre, and draw straws to see which of you two should be the husband of this good-looking heiress. But the talk of an old man in young people's ears is very much the same as young people's talk in old folk's ears—empty sound, signifying nothing."

The old marquis intimated to his three relations that he desired no answer, and returned to the salon, whither the Abbé Goujet and his sister had arrived during his absence. The proposition that they should draw straws for their cousin's hand had jarred unpleasantly on the two Simeuses' sensibilities, and Laurence, finding the taste of the remedy proposed by her kinsman bitter in her mouth, was disgusted. All three, therefore, without forgetting their politeness, were a little less gracious to the old man. M. de Chargebœuf, who did not fail to perceive the change, repeatedly cast looks full of compassion on those three charming persons. Although the conversation became general, he



came back to the necessity of bowing to the inevitable, and applauded M. d'Hauteserre for his persistence in insisting that his sons should take service in the army.

"Bonaparte," said he, "makes dukes. He has erected fiefs of the Empire, he will create counts. Malin would like to be styled Comte de Gondreville. That is an idea," he added, looking at the MM. de Simeuse, "which may prove profitable to you."

"Or fatal," interjected Laurence.

When the horses were ready the Marquis made his adieus and was attended to the door by the entire company. When he was seated in his carriage he signed to Laurence to approach, and she perched herself upon the step with the lightness of a bird.

"You are no ordinary woman," he said, bending over to her ear; "you will understand me. Malin suffers too much from his remorse to leave you undisturbed; he will be laying pitfalls for you. Be careful, very careful what you do, consider your least important actions! And, finally, come to terms with your enemy—that is my last word."

The two brothers stood silent and motionless beside their cousin in the middle of the grass-plot, watching the berlingot as it wheeled out at the great gate and sped rapidly away on the Troyes road, for Laurence had imparted to them the old gentleman's parting words. It is a mistake for experience to display itself in public in a berlingot and decked out with "pigeon's wings" and striped silk stockings. None of those young persons was capable of comprehending the changes that were going on in France; their nerves were a-quiver with indignation, honor was boiling and bubbling in their veins in unison with their noble blood.

"That man the head of the Chargebœufs!" said the Marquis de Simeuse, "a man whose device is *AD SIT FOR TIOR!* (where is there a braver!), one of the proudest of battle cries."

"He has degenerated, he is become *le Bœuf* (the Ox)," said Laurence with a scornful smile.

"These are not the days of St. Louis!" cried the younger de Simeuse.

"MOURIR EN CHANTANT!" exclaimed the Comtesse. "The cry of the five white maidens shall be mine."

"And our device, is it not CY MEURS? So, no quarter!" rejoined the elder de Simeuse. "For, on reflection, we might discover that our kinsman the Ox ruminated wisely on what he came here to tell us. That Gondreville should be the name of a Malin!"

"And the residence!" cried the cadet.

"Mansard planned it for those of noble birth, and the people will rear their brats in it!" said the elder.

"Before that comes to pass may I see Gondreville burn!" exclaimed the Comtesse.

A man from the village, there to inspect a calf of which old d'Hauteserre was trying to negotiate the sale, heard these words as he came from the stable.

"Let us go in," said Laurence with a smile. "We had nearly committed an indiscretion and proved the correctness of the Ox's arguments apropos of a calf.—My poor Michu," she continued when they had regained the salon, "I had almost forgotten your little ebullition of temper; but we are not in the odor of sanctity just at present, so you will please do nothing to compromise us. Have you any other peccadillo to reproach yourself with?"

"I reproach myself with not having killed the murderers of my old masters before hastening to the assistance of the present ones."

"Michu!" exclaimed the curé.

"But I don't intend to leave the country," he went on, not heeding the priest's admonition, "without knowing that you are safe. I see young fellows sneaking about the roads and lanes of whom I don't like the looks. The last time we were hunting in the forest, that fool gamekeeper who was given my place at Gondreville came up to me and asked if

we were making ourselves at home. 'Ah! my lad,' says I, 'it's no easy matter for folk to forget in two months habits that they've been practicing for two centuries.'"

"You were wrong, Michu," said the Marquis de Simeuse, while the pleased smile that overspread his face belied his words.

"What answer did he make you?" asked M. d'Hauteserre.

"He said," returned Michu, "that he would inform the Senator of our impudence."

"Comte de Gondreville!" exclaimed the elder of the d'Hauteserre brothers. "Ah, the merry masquerade! But it is all right; don't they address Bonaparte as 'Your Majesty'?"

"And the Grandduke of Berg as 'Your Highness'?" added the curé.

"Who's that?" asked M. de Simeuse.

"Murat, Napoleon's brother-in-law," replied M. d'Hauteserre.

"Good!" Laurence ejaculated. "And do they address the Marquis de Beauharnais' widow as 'Your Majesty'?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle," replied the curé.

"We ought to take a run up to Paris and see all those performances!" cried Laurence.

"Ah! Mademoiselle," said Michu, "I was there not long ago to put young Michu at school, and, take my word for it, if anybody attempts to trifle with what they call the Imperial Guard he'll make a big mistake. If the rest of the army is built on that model, the machine is likely to outlast you and me."

"It is reported that sons of noble families are enlisting," observed M. d'Hauteserre.

"And your children, in conformity with the existing laws," rejoined the curé, "will be compelled to serve. The law recognizes no distinction of rank or family."

"That man is doing us more mischief with his court than the Revolution with its axe!" cried Laurence.



"The Church prays for him," remarked the curé.

These phrases, let fall in quick succession without premeditation, were so many commentaries on the wise suggestions of the old Marquis de Chargebœuf; but the faith, the honor of those young folk were too great to admit of their listening to terms of compromise. They comforted themselves with the same assurances that vanquished parties have in all times been in the habit of employing: the luck of the victors must come to an end some time, Napoleon was kept in power only by the army, *de facto* rule must sooner or later give way to government *de jure*, and so forth. Closing their ears to these words of warning, they stumbled blindly into the pit which had been dug for their feet, and which teachable, prudent people like the worthy d'Hauteserre would have avoided. If men would only be frank about the matter, they would admit that misfortune never came on them without their having previously received some notification, either open or occult. Not until after their disaster do many apprehend the true significance of this mysterious or apparent warning.

"In any event, Madame la Comtesse knows that I cannot leave the country until I have rendered my accounts," said Michu in a tone intended for Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne's ear alone.

Her only answer was a nod of acquiescence to the farmer, who went his way. Michu, who immediately sold all his property to Beauvisage, the lessee of Bellache, was not to receive his money for some twenty days. A month after the visit of the Marquis, Laurence, who had apprised her cousins of the safety of their fortune, suggested to them that they employ the day of *mi-carême* (mid-Lent) for exhuming the million buried in the forest. The great quantity of snow that had fallen had hitherto prevented Michu from recovering it, but he preferred that the operation should be conducted in presence of his masters. Michu was fully determined to leave the country; he was afraid of himself

"Malin has unexpectedly arrived at Gondreville; what for, nobody knows," he said to his mistress; "and the thought haunts me that if the owner should die, *from any cause*, Gondreville would be for sale. I feel a sense of guilt that I do not obey my promptings!"

"What reason can he have for leaving Paris in the middle of winter?"

"All Arcis is asking itself that question," replied Michu. "He left his family in Paris and was accompanied only by his valet. M. Grévin, the notary of Arcis, and Mme. Marion, the receiver-general's wife and sister-in-law of the Marion who used to do Malin's dirty work for him, are with him at the chateau."

Laurence considered *mi-carême* a favorable day for their enterprise, because it would permit of her getting the servants out of the way. The peasants would be drawn to the city by the maskers, the fields would be deserted. As is so often the case in criminal affairs, however, the choice of the day tended to hasten the catastrophe. Chance made her calculations with no less adroitness than Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne made hers. M. and Mme. d'Hautesserre would be so terrified on learning that eleven hundred thousand francs in gold were concealed in a chateau just outside the forest that the young d'Hautesserres, on being consulted, were of opinion that it would be best to say nothing to them of the matter. The secret of the expedition was divided between Gothard, the four gentlemen, Michu and Laurence. After much figuring it was decided that the gold should be brought away in three trips, each of the seven horses carrying on each trip forty-eight thousand francs in a long sack slung across his back behind the saddle. As a precautionary measure it was resolved that all the servants, whose curiosity might prove a source of danger, should be packed off to Troyes to witness the festivities. Durieu, Marthe and Catherine, who could be trusted, would remain at home and keep house. The servants accepted without objection the holiday that was given them, and were off by peep of

day. Gothard, assisted by Michu, cleaned and saddled the horses at an early hour. The caravan passed in straggling array through the gardens of the chateau, and from there masters and men gained the forest. Just as they were mounting—for the gate of the park was so low that all hands proceeded that far on foot, leading their horses by the bridle—old Beauvisage, the lessee of Bellache, passed by.

"Halle!" cried Gothard. "Who goes there?"

"Oh, it is only I," said the honest farmer as he came out upon the road. "Your servant, Messieurs. So you are off for the chase, notwithstanding the orders from the prefecture? Well, it won't be I who will inform on you, but have a care! If you have friends, you have also many enemies."

"Oh!" replied Robert d'Hauteserre with a smile, "God send us a successful termination of our hunt, and you shall have your old masters back again."

These words, to which the event gave a meaning entirely different from that intended, gained for Robert a look of reproof from Laurence. The elder of the Simeuses believed that Malin would restore the Gondreville property if indemnified for his outlay. Those children were bent on pursuing a course directly opposite to that which the Marquis de Chargebœuf had advised. Robert, who shared their hopes, was thinking of them when he uttered those fatal words.

Michu waited for the others to pass through and took the key of the gate.

"In any event, *motus*, old man!" he said to Beauvisage.

It was one of those beautiful days late in March when the sun shines bright and the sky is undimmed by clouds; when the air is balmy, the ground dry, and one wonders that the trees are leafless amid the geniality of their surroundings. So mild was the weather that patches of verdure were visible here and there in the landscape.

"We are going in quest of a treasure, while the real treasure of our house is you, cousin!" pleasantly said the elder of the Simeuses.



Laurence led the little cortège, with one of her cousins on either side. The two d'Hauteserres came next, and were followed by Michu. Gothard rode in advance of all to see that the way was clear.

"As we are about to recover our fortune—a portion of it, at least—marry my brother," said the cadet in a low voice; "he adores you, and you will be as rich as most of the nobles of to-day."

"No, I am rich enough for two," she replied. "Let him have all the money, and I will marry you."

"Be it so!" exclaimed the Marquis de Simeuse. "And I will go away to search for a woman worthy to be your sister."

"Your love for me is less than I had believed," Laurence rejoined, eying him with an expression of jealousy.

"No; I love you both far more than you love me," replied the Marquis.

"So, then, you would sacrifice yourself?" asked Laurence, casting on the elder brother a look full of momentary preference.

The Marquis was silent.

"Well, in that case my thoughts would be all of you, and that would be an unendurable condition of affairs for my husband," continued Laurence, from whom the other's silence extorted a gesture of impatience.

"How could I live without you?" cried the cadet, looking at his brother.

"But you cannot marry us both," said the Marquis. "And," he added, in the abrupt tone of one who feels deeply, "it is time to come to a decision!"

He urged his horse forward that the two d'Hauteserres might not hear. His brother's mount and Laurence's followed the lead of their companion. When they had placed a sufficient distance between them and the three others Laurence attempted to speak, but tears were at first her only language.

"I will enter a convent," she said at last.

"And would let the line of the Cinq-Cygnés die out?" asked the younger of the brothers; "and would make two men unhappy instead of one, who would be so with his own consent? No, he of us two who shall be condemned to be your brother only will accept his lot with cheerfulness. When we learned that we were not so poor as we had supposed we were, my brother and I came to an agreement," he continued, looking at the Marquis. "If I am the one preferred, the whole of our fortune becomes my brother's. If I am the unlucky one, he is to confer it all on me, together with the Simeuse titles, for he will be Cinq-Cygné! So, whatever the result may be, the brother who has not the happiness will at least have wealth and power. Finally, if he finds his grief greater than he can bear, he will go and seek a soldier's death in the army, in order not to darken the lives of the happy pair."

"We are true knights of the Middle Ages, we are worthy of our ancestors!" cried the Marquis. "Speak, Laurence!"

"Matters cannot remain as they are," said the cadet.

"Believe me, Laurence, renunciation is not always painful," said the Marquis.

"My dear friends," she returned, "I am incapable of deciding. I love you both as though you were but one, and as your mother loved you. God must be our help—I will not, cannot choose. We will refer the matter to chance, and I impose one condition."

"What is that?"

"That that one of you who shall become a brother to me shall remain with me until I give him permission to depart. I wish to be sole judge as to whether he shall go or stay."

"It shall be as you desire," the brothers replied, without asking themselves what was in their cousin's mind.

"The one of you to whom Mme. d'Hauteserre speaks first at dinner this evening, after the 'Benedicite,' shall be my husband. But there must be no underhand methods, neither of you is to force an answer by questioning her."

"We will play fair," said the cadet.

Each of the brothers kissed Laurence's hand. The certainty of a *dénouement* in which each might flatter himself that he would be the favorite of fortune put the twins in the best of spirits.

"In any event, dear Laurence, you will make a Comte de Cinq-Cygne," said the Marquis.

"And the stake is, who shall *not* be a Simeuse," added the younger brother.

"I think, from the way things look now, that Madame won't remain long unmarried," hazarded Michu from his post in rear of the two d'Hauteserres. "My masters are very merry. If my mistress makes her choice I don't intend to go away; I want to see that wedding!"

Neither of the d'Hauteserres made answer. A raven rose suddenly from the ground and winged its flight between the d'Hauteserres and Michu, who, superstitious as are all uneducated people, forthwith imagined that he heard in the air the tolling of funeral bells. The day opened brightly for the lovers, who seldom see ravens when they are together in the woods. Michu, provided with his plan, quickly determined the localities; each of the gentlemen was equipped with a pick. The money was soon uncovered. The part of the forest where it had been concealed was unfrequented, remote from any road or human habitation, so that the caravan, freighted with gold, encountered no one. That was unfortunate. On coming from Cinq-Cygne to fetch away the last two hundred thousand francs the caravan, emboldened by success, took a more direct road than that which it had followed on the preceding trips. This road passed over some rising ground whence there was a view of the park at Gondreville.

"Fire!" screamed Laurence, sighting a column of bluish smoke.

"A bonfire, probably," remarked Michu.

Laurence, who was acquainted with every path and by-way of the forest, touched her horse with the spur and rode rapidly to the pavilion of Cinq-Cygne, Michu's former place



of residence. Although the house was uninhabited and closed, the gate stood open, and Laurence took note that several horses had lately passed that way. The column of smoke rose from a meadow in the English park, where she supposed the gardeners were burning weeds.

"Ah! you are mixed up in it too, Mademoiselle," exclaimed Violette, who came galloping madly from the park and pulled up in front of Laurence. "But it's only a carnival prank, isn't it? They won't kill him, will they?"

"Whom?"

"Your cousins don't want his blood?"

"Whose blood?"

"The Senator's."

"You are crazy, Violette!"

"Well, then, what are you doing here?" he asked.

At the thought that her cousins were in danger the intrepid amazon dug the spurs into her horse's flanks and came on the ground just as the sacks were being loaded.

"Alerte! I don't know what is wrong, but let us hasten back to Cinq-Cygne!"

While the gentlemen were occupied with the transfer of the wealth saved by the old Marquis, strange events were occurring at Gondreville.

At two o'clock of the afternoon the Senator and his friend Grévin were deep in a game of chess before the fire in the great salon of the rez-de-chaussée. Mme. Grévin and Mme. Marion, seated on a sofa at the corner of the chimney, were engaged in conversation. All the servants of the chateau had gone off to see a curious masque that had been long advertised in the arrondissement of Arcis. The family of the keeper who occupied Michu's old quarters in the pavilion of Cinq-Cygne had likewise gone there. The Senator's valet and Violette were the only persons besides the masters in the chateau. The concierge and two gardeners with their wives had remained at their posts, but their quarters were situated at the entrance of the drive, where the Arcis avenue ends, and were so far from the chateau that

the report of firearms discharged at the latter point would hardly be audible. And then, too, those people were standing on their doorstep and gazing in the direction of Arcis, distant half a league, in the hope to see something of the maskers. Violette was waiting in the antechamber until it should be Grévin's and the Senator's pleasure to receive him for the purpose of discussing certain matters relating to the extension of his lease. At that moment five men, masked and gloved and in every detail of their manner and appearance closely resembling Michu and the MM. d'Hauteserre and de Simeuse, rushed in and fell upon the valet de chambre and Violette, into whose mouths they stuffed handkerchiefs by way of gags and whom they bound with cords to chairs in an adjoining closet. Notwithstanding the despatch with which they conducted their operations, the aggressors were unable to complete their work until the valet and Violette had each uttered a shrill cry, which was heard in the salon. The women would have it that it was a cry of distress.

"Listen!" said Mme. Grévin, "there are robbers about!"

"Bah! it's the merry-makers," Grévin asserted; "the maskers will be here presently."

This discussion afforded the five strangers time to close the doors on the side of the court of honor and to turn the key on the valet and Violette. Mme. Grévin, who was a woman with a mind of her own, declared that she would find out what was the cause of the rumpus; she rose, went out, and almost immediately found herself in the clutches of the five masked men, who awarded her the same treatment that they had bestowed on Violette and the valet. Then they burst tumultuously into the salon, where the two largest and strongest of the party laid hands on the Comte de Gondreville, gagged him, and bore him off across the park, while the three others in like manner gagged the notary and Mme. Marion and bound them to their fauteuils. The whole business did not occupy more than half an hour. The three strangers, presently reinforced by the two who had carried

off the Senator, proceeded to search the chateau from cellar to garret. They opened all the closets without delaying to pick the locks, they sounded all the walls; they were masters of the premises until five o'clock. At that hour the valet finished his task of gnawing with his teeth the cords that bound Violette's hands. Violette, as soon as he had relieved himself of his gag, raised his voice and began shouting with might and main for help. The five strangers, hearing that terrific din, returned to the gardens, mounted in hot haste horses similar in appearance to those in the Cinq-Cygne stables, and scampered off, not so expeditiously, however, that Violette had not time to note their appearance accurately in his memory. After he had undone the fastenings of the valet, who released the women and the notary, Violette got on his nag and hurried off in pursuit of the evil-doers. He was no less astonished to see both leaves of the great gate of the pavilion standing wide open than to behold Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne acting the part of a vedette.

When the young Comtesse had disappeared, Violette was rejoined by Grévin, mounted and accompanied by the garde champêtre of the commune of Gondreville, whom the concierge had furnished with a mount from the stables of the chateau. The concierge's wife had gone to notify the post of gendarmes at Arcis. Violette immediately informed Grévin of his encounter with Laurence and the flight of that audacious young woman, the depth and decision of whose character were known to both of them.

"She was mounting guard," said Violette.

"Can it be possible that it was our young friends at Cinq-Cygne who did the deed?" exclaimed Grévin.

"What! didn't you recognize that big ruffian Michu?" replied Violette. "It was he who tackled me, I felt the weight of his fist. Besides, the horses were unmistakably from the Cinq-Cygne stables."

Observing the marks of horses' feet on the gravel of the round-point and in the park, the notary left the garde champêtre on watch at the gate to see that no one disturbed those



precious imprints, and sent Violette for the juge de paix of Arcis that he might take formal note of them. Then he returned with all speed to the chateau of Gondreville, where he found a lieutenant and sous-lieutenant of the imperial gendarmerie, with a corporal and four men. The lieutenant was none other than the corporal whose head little François had damaged so seriously two years previously, and whom Corentin had acquainted with the name of his sprightly adversary. This man, Giguet by name, whose brother was in the army and became one of the most efficient colonels of artillery, made a name for himself by his capacity as an officer of gendarmerie. He subsequently had command of the squadron of the Aube. The sous-lieutenant, named Welff, was the man whom the reader will recall by the circumstance of his having once driven Corentin from Cinq-Cygne to the pavilion and from the pavilion to Troyes. During the journey the Parisian had sufficiently enlightened the "Egyptian" as to what he termed the rascality of Laurence and Michu. These two officers, therefore, might be expected to, and did, display much zeal in their operations against the inmates of Cinq-Cygne. Malin and Grévin had jointly had a hand in the fabrication of the Code known as "Code of Brumaire, Year IV.," the result of the legal lore of the so-styled National Convention promulgated by the Directorate. Grévin, therefore, who was acquainted with all the minutiae and subtleties of this body of laws, acting on a presumption amounting to a certainty of the criminality of Michu and the MM. de Simeuse and d'Hauteserre, was enabled to proceed in this matter with terrible celerity. No one at the present day, unless it may be an occasional magistrate grown gray in the service, has any recollection of the organization of that judicial system, which Napoleon was even then supplanting by the promulgation of the Codes and the institution of the magistracy which still continue to be observed and respected in France.

The "Code of Brumaire, Year IV." reserved to the *directeur du jury* of the department the immediate cogni-

zance of the offence committed at Gondreville. Observe that the Convention had eliminated the word "crime" from the legal terminology. It admitted only "offences against the law," offences that carried with them fines, imprisonment, and various penalties classified as degrading or corporal. The death penalty was "corporal." After the peace, however, the corporal punishment of death was suppressed and replaced by twenty-four years' imprisonment with hard labor. The Convention announced its opinion that the death penalty and twenty-four years' service in the galleys were equivalent. What shall we say of the Penal Code, which condemns the criminal to the galleys for the term of his natural life? The system then being organized by the ministers under Napoleon's direction did away entirely with the *directeurs du jury*, in whom excessive authority was vested. The functions of the *directeur du jury*, from the moment the defendant came within his judicial ken, partook of those of the agent of judicial police, the *procureur du roi*, the *juge d'instruction*, and the *cour royale*. His procedure and indictment, however, were subject to review by a commissary of the executive power and by eight jurors, to whom he submitted the facts elicited at the examination, who heard the accused, considered the testimony of the witnesses, and pronounced a preliminary verdict, called *verdict d'accusation*. The *directeur*, however, acquired over the jurors, meeting as they did in his cabinet, so great an influence that they could hardly help being his instruments. These jurors constituted the "jury d'accusation." There was another set of jurors who constituted the jury of the criminal court before which the accused was to be tried. These were called *jures de jugement*, in contradistinction to the *jures d'accusation*. The criminal tribunal, to which Napoleon had given the name *cour criminelle*, was made up of a president, four judges, the public prosecutor, and a commissary of the government. There were, however, between 1799 and 1806, courts called *cours speciales*, composed of judges selected from the civil tribunals, and empowered to try without a jury certain

descriptions of cases in certain departments. This conflict between special and criminal justice resulted in frequent questions of competency, which were referred to the tribunal de cassation. If the department of the Aube had had its *cour speciale*, the assault committed on the person of a Senator of the Empire would doubtless have been brought before it for trial; but that peaceful department was exempt from this exceptional jurisdiction. Grévin therefore despatched the sous-lieutenant to the directeur du jury at Troyes. The "Egyptian" rode for all he was worth, and returned to Gondreville, bringing with him in a postchaise that exalted functionary.

The directeur du jury at Troyes, Malin's intimate friend, and indebted to him for all he was or hoped to be, had been at different times lieutenant de bailliage and clerk to one of the committees of the Convention. This magistrate, whose name was Lechesneau, an adept in the old school of criminal practice, had, along with Grévin, materially assisted Malin in his judicial labors in the Convention. On this account Malin had recommended him to Cambacérès, who appointed him a judge-advocate in Italy. Unfortunately for his future, Lechesneau had a liaison with a lady of position in Turin, and Napoleon, as the only means of saving him from the disgrace of being haled before a police court at the instance of the wronged husband for the abduction of an adulterous child, was forced to send him home. Lechesneau, owing everything to Malin and recognizing the importance of the affair, had brought with him the captain of gendarmerie and a detachment of twelve men.

Before leaving he had naturally had an interview with the prefect, who, owing to the rapid approach of night, was unable to avail himself of the telegraph. A courier was sent off to Paris to notify the minister of police, the chief justice and the Emperor of the audacious crime. On arriving at Gondreville, Lechesneau found in the salon Mesdames Grévin and Marion, Violette, the Senator's valet, and the juge de paix, attended by his clerk. The chateau had



already been subjected to a thorough search. The juge de paix, assisted by Grévin, was carefully collating the various fragments of evidence. The magistrate was first of all struck by the profound ingenuity displayed by the confederates in the selection of the day and hour for their attempt. The hour was an obstacle in the way of their immediately seeking clews and guiding indications. At that season of the year, at half-past five, the earliest moment that Violette had been able to start in pursuit of the assailants, it was almost dark, and darkness serves to cloak many evil deeds. And to choose a holiday, a day of rejoicing, when everybody would be gone to see the maskers at Arcis and the Senator would be left entirely alone, did not that show a deep design that there should be no witnesses?

"Let us be just to the agents of the prefecture of police," said Lechesneau. "They have never ceased to warn us against the gentlemen at Cinq-Cygne, and have told us repeatedly that, sooner or later, they would be guilty of some nefarious action."

Assured of the active co-operation of the Prefect of the Aube, who, with the object of getting on the traces of the five masked men and discovering the whereabouts of the Senator, sent estafettes into all the prefectures adjoining that of Troyes, Lechesneau began by establishing the bases of his examination. With two men of the capacity of Grévin and the juge de paix to assist, this work progressed with great rapidity. The juge de paix (Pigoult was his name), formerly chief clerk in the law office at Paris in which Malin and Grévin had pursued their legal studies, was three months later made president of the tribunal of Arcis. As regarded Michu, Lechesneau had heard of the threats which that individual had once uttered against M. Marion, and also of the ambush from which the Senator had had such a narrow escape on a certain occasion in his park. These two occurrences, which were interdependent, were undoubtedly the forerunners of the present outrage, and pointed to the ex-foreman as the leader of the malefactors,

all the more clearly that Grévin and his wife, Violette and Mme. Marion, stoutly asserted that among the five masked men they had recognized one who was the very likeness of Michu. The color of the hair and whiskers, the person's short, square, sturdy form, made his disguise almost useless. And then, too, who was there besides Michu that had a key which would open the gate of Cinq-Cygne? The keeper and his wife, on being questioned upon their return from Arcis, declared that they had closed and locked the two gates. The gates, when examined by the juge de paix, assisted by his clerk and the garde champêtre, showed no trace of force having been employed.

"When we gave him his walking papers he must have retained a set of duplicate keys," said Grévin. "But he has doubtless been meditating some desperate deed for a long time, for he sold all his property recently, to be paid for in twenty days, and received the price in my office only day before yesterday."

"They will have saddled the whole business upon him!" exclaimed Lechesneau, forcibly impressed by this circumstance. "He has shown himself to be their *âme damnée*, their tool."

Who better than MM. de Simeuse and d'Hautesserre knew all the ways, habits and localities of the chateau? None of the assailants had been at fault for a moment in his researches; the band had gone everywhere with a directness and certainty which proved that it knew what it wanted, and knew, too, just where to find it. None of the closets (which they had left open) had been forced, proving that they had keys to them, and, strange to relate! not the smallest article was missing, demonstrating that theft was not their object. And finally, Violette, after positively identifying the horses as inmates of the Cinq-Cygne stables, had actually come face to face with the Comtesse mounting guard at the keeper's pavilion! From this ensemble of facts and depositions there resulted, even for the fairest and most impartial minds, a strong presumption of guilt as regarded MM. d'Hautesserre

and de Simeuse and Michu, which, in the eyes of a directeur du jury, became absolute certainty. Now, what had been their purpose with regard to the future Comte de Gondreville? To extort from him a retrocession of his property, for the purchase of which the foreman, so early as 1799, had declared that he had the funds in hand? Viewed in this light, the aspect of the case underwent a total change.

The great criminologist asked himself with what purpose they had been so active in ransacking the chateau. If they had been actuated by feelings of revenge, the raiders might have killed Malin. Perhaps he was dead, dead and buried. However, the fact that he had been abducted indicated sequestration as the greater probability. But what could be their object in confining him when once their researches in the chateau had been successfully accomplished? It was surely madness to believe that the abduction of a dignitary of the Empire could remain undiscovered for any length of time! The publicity that would follow swift on the heels of the attempt would neutralize all its prospective advantages.

To these objections Pigoult made answer that justice could never hope to decipher all the motives that actuated the vicious and depraved. In all criminal trials, from the judge to the prisoner and from the prisoner to the judge, there were unfathomable obscurities; conscience had its depths that the light of human intelligence could never penetrate save by the guilty one's confession.

To this proposition Grévin and Lechesneau gave an assenting nod, but all the same did not remove their eyes from those dark places which they were endeavoring to illuminate.

"And yet the Emperor treated them with the utmost kindness," said Pigoult to Grévin and Mme. Marion. "He granted them a full pardon, had their names stricken off the list, and that notwithstanding the fact that they were active in the last plot contrived against him."

Lechesneau, without further delay, despatched all his



gendarmerie into the forest and the valley of Cinq-Cygne, assigning to Giguët as his assistant the juge de paix, who, in the language of the Code, became his auxiliary officer of judicial police; he directed him to collect the elementary evidence for the inquiry in the commune of Cinq-Cygne, and, if necessary, to examine the inhabitants under oath. He rapidly dictated and signed a warrant for the arrest of Michu, as to whose complicity in the affair there appeared to be no question. After the departure of the juge de paix and the gendarmes, Lechesneau resumed the onerous task of framing the warrants for the Simeuses and d'Hauteserres. The Code made it obligatory that these documents should contain, *in extenso*, all the charges against the delinquents. Giguët and the juge de paix moved so rapidly on Cinq-Cygne that they met the servants of the chateau returning from Troyes. On being arrested and conducted to the mairie, where they were examined under oath, they all, ignorant of the far-reaching consequences of their answer, ingenuously confessed that they had received permission the night before to go to Troyes and be absent the entire day. In reply to a question from the juge de paix, each of them in like manner declared that the treat had been offered them by Mademoiselle of her own free will, without solicitation on their part. This testimony struck the juge de paix as so important that he sent Welff, the "Egyptian," back to Gondreville to request M. Lechesneau to come and attend in person to the arrest of the gentlemen at Cinq-Cygne, to the end that their action might be simultaneous, for it was his intention to proceed to Michu's house and pounce down unexpectedly on the alleged leader of the malefactors. These fresh developments appeared so decisive that Lechesneau started at once for Cinq-Cygne, enjoining on Grévin to see that a careful watch was maintained over the tracks left by the horses in the park. The directeur du jury well knew with what approval the people of Troyes would regard his proceedings against quondam nobles and enemies of the people, now enemies of the Emperor. In such a frame of

mind as this, a magistrate is only too prone to take simple presumptions for evident truths. However, as he rode from Gondreville to Cinq-Cygne in the Senator's own carriage, it occurred to Lechesneau—who certainly had in him the making of a great magistrate if it had not been for the passion to which he owed his disgrace, for the Emperor was not always thus prudish—that the audacity displayed by the young men and Michu was characteristic of hot-headed fools, and was utterly at variance with Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne's reputation as a sensible, practical woman. His own private belief was that the outrage was prompted by motives quite different from that of extorting from Malin a retrocession of Gondreville. In every calling, even in the magistracy, there exists what may be called the conscience of the profession. Lechesneau's perplexities were the result of that conscientiousness that every man devotes to the fulfilment of duties in which he finds pleasure, that the savant infuses into his own particular branch of science, the artist into his art, the judge into the administration of justice. Wherefore it may be that the judge offers to the prisoner undergoing trial more guarantees than the jury. The magistrate allows himself to be guided only by the laws of reason, while the juror frequently lets himself be swept away by the flood of sentiment. The directeur du jury put several questions to himself, to which he proposed to try to find satisfactory answers in the arrest of the delinquents. Although by this time the whole city of Troyes was agog over Malin's abduction, it was still unknown in Arcis at eight o'clock, for every one had been at supper when the summons came for the gendarmerie and the juge de paix, and of course the tidings had not reached Cinq-Cygne, where the valley and the chateau were for the second time invested, but by the servants of justice this time and not by the police: an arrangement possible with one is generally impossible with the other.

Laurence had only had to intimate to Marthe, Catherine and the Durieus that they were not to leave the house or

show themselves at the windows to be implicitly obeyed. At each trip the horses were halted in the sunken road opposite the gap, and from there Robert and Michu, the strongest of the band, conveyed the sacks through the gap into a cellar situated underneath the staircase of the tower known as "Mademoiselle's." On reaching the chateau on their last trip, about half-past five o'clock, the four gentlemen and Michu immediately set to work to bury the treasure. Laurence and the d'Hauteserres thought it would be best to wall up the cellar. Michu volunteered to do the work with the assistance of Gothard, who trotted off to the farmhouse for some sacks of plaster that had been left there by the masons at the time the house was finished, and Marthe went home in order to give the sacks to Gothard in a manner not to create suspicion. Michu's farmhouse stood on the eminence whence he had once detected the presence of the gendarmes, and it was approached by way of the sunken road. Michu, who was hungry, pressed his work so vigorously that by half-past seven it was completed. He stepped along at a brisk gait on his homeward way in order to save Gothard the trouble of bringing a last sack of plaster that he had thought he needed. His house was already surrounded by a force consisting of the juge de paix and his clerk, the garde champêtre of Cinq-Cygne, and three gendarmes, who, on hearing his approaching steps, concealed themselves and allowed him to pass in.

Michu saw Gothard some way off with a sack upon his shoulder and shouted to him:

"It is done, my lad; take it back and come in and have dinner with us."

Michu, the sweat rolling off his face, his clothes stained with plaster and the muddy drippings of the stones taken from the gap, strode with the joyous anticipation of a hungry man into the kitchen where Marthe and Marthe's mother were serving the soup while awaiting his arrival.

He stepped to the sink and turned on the water to wash



his hands; as he did so the juge de paix presented himself, accompanied by his clerk and the garde champêtre.

"What is your will, Monsieur Pigoult?" asked Michu.

"In the name of the Emperor and the law, I arrest you," the juge de paix replied.

At that stage of the proceedings the three gendarmes appeared, bringing in Gothard. At sight of the laced hats Marthe and her mother exchanged a look of terror.

"Ah, bah! what for?" asked Michu, who took his place at the table and said to his wife, "Let me have something to eat, I am half starved."

"You know what for as well as we do," returned the juge de paix; exhibiting the warrant and signing to his clerk to go on with the procès-verbal.

"Well, Gothard, you seem surprised! Are you going to eat your dinner, yes or no?" said Michu. "Let them write their stupid nonsense."

"Just see what a state your clothing is in!" said the juge de paix. "And I suppose you'll not attempt to deny what you said just now to Gothard in the courtyard?"

Michu's wife kept him supplied with food; she was astounded to see him display such unconcern. He ate ravenously and vouchsafed no answer to the other's question; his mouth was full and his heart innocent. A horrible dread spoiled Gothard's appetite.

"Come," said the garde champêtre in Michu's ear, "what have you done with the Senator? Judging from what the gendarmes say, your neck is in danger."

"Ah! good heavens!" cried Marthe, who heard his concluding words and fell over like one struck by lightning.

"That Violette has been up to his dirty tricks again!" Michu exclaimed, remembering Laurence's words.

"Aha! then you know that Violette saw you?" observed the juge de paix.

Michu bit his lips and resolved to hold his tongue in future, and Gothard imitated his taciturnity. Seeing that it was useless to attempt to get anything out of him, and hav-

ing some knowledge of what his neighbors called Michu's perverseness, the juge de paix gave orders to tie his and Gothard's hands and conduct them to the chateau of Cinq-Cygne, whither he bent his steps to rejoin the directeur du jury.

The gentlemen and Laurence were too hungry and dinner was a matter of too deep interest to them that they should delay it by going to their rooms to dress. Equipped as they were, therefore, she in her habit, they in buckskin breeches, riding boots and green cutaways, they entered the salon, where they found M. and Mme. d'Hauteserre awaiting them in a not very placid frame of mind. The worthy man had noticed their mysterious movements, as well as the distrust of which he seemed to be the object, for it was manifestly impossible for Laurence to order him about as she did the servants. So, when one of his sons eluded a question put to him by rising and leaving the table, he said to his wife:

"I am afraid that Laurence is preparing more trouble for us!"

"What particular game were you pursuing to-day?" Mme. d'Hauteserre asked Laurence.

"Ah! some day you will learn in what a nefarious affair your sons have been participating," she jestingly replied.

These words, though uttered in joke made the old lady shiver. Catherine came in and announced dinner. Laurence took M. d'Hauteserre's arm, and smiled at thought of the trick she was playing on her cousins by compelling one of them to give his arm to the old lady, converted by their secret pact into the arbiter of their destiny.

The Marquis de Simeuse conducted Mme. d'Hauteserre to her place at table. Thereupon the situation became so solemn that, when the "Benedicite" was said, Laurence and her two cousins could feel their hearts beating under their jackets. Mme. d'Hauteserre, who carved, was struck by

the anxiety depicted on the countenance of the twin Simeuses and the change that had come over Laurence's sheeplike face.

"Something beyond the common has occurred!" she cried, casting a frightened look around.

"To whom are you speaking?" Laurence inquired.

"To all of you," replied the old lady.

"Speaking for myself, mother," said Robert, "my appetite is fairly wolfish."

Mme. d'Hauterierre, in her flusterment, handed the Marquis de Simeuse a plate intended for the cadet.

"I am like your mother, forever making mistakes, in spite of your cravats. I meant to serve your brother," she said to him.

"You have served him better than you knew," replied the cadet, a sudden pallor rising to his face. "You have made him Comte de Cinq-Cygne."

The poor young man but now so gay saw himself doomed to a life of solitude and sorrow, but he mustered his courage to look at Laurence and smile, and crushed down his mortal feelings of regret. In an instant the lover was lost in the brother.

"What! can the Comtesse have made her choice?" exclaimed the old lady.

"No," returned Laurence. "We left it in the hands of fate, and you were the instrument."

She told of the agreement concluded that morning. The elder Simeuse, who saw his brother's white face grow whiter still, was tempted momentarily to cry, "Take her, marry her; I will go off somewhere and die!" Just as the dessert was placed on the table the diners heard a knocking on the window of the dining-room, on the garden side. The elder d'Hauterierre, who responded to the summons, stood aside to give admission to the curé, who had torn his small-clothes in scaling the park wall.

"Fly! They are coming to arrest you!"

"For what?"



"That I don't know as yet, but proceedings have been entered against you."

His words were greeted with shouts of laughter.

"We are innocent of any wrong!" exclaimed the gentlemen.

"Innocent or guilty," replied the curé, "mount and ride for the frontier. There you will be in a position to assert and prove your innocence. One may return after a sentence *in contumaciam*, but there is no returning after a conviction extorted from the court by the passions of the populace, where the case has been prejudged. Do you remember the *mot* of President de Harlay?—'If I were accused of stealing the towers of Notre-Dame, my first step would be to run away.'"

"But is not flight an admission of guilt?" suggested the Marquis de Simeuse.

"Do not fly," entreated Laurence.

"All rant and fustian, sublime absurdities!" cried the curé in despair. "If I had the might of God I would carry you off bodily. But if they find me here now, in the state I am in, they will turn this untimely visit against me as well as you. I am going by the way I came. Reflect! there is still time. The officers overlooked the wall between your grounds and my garden; the chateau is guarded on every other side."

The tramp of many footsteps and the clatter of the sabres of the gendarmerie filled the courtyard and penetrated to the dining-room shortly after the departure of the poor curé, whose advice seemed to be prized as lightly as that of the Marquis de Chargeboeuf.

"Our common existence," said the younger of the Simeuses, gloomily, addressing Laurence, "is a monstrosity, something outside the laws of nature, and the love we bear each other is monstrous. This monstrosity has won your heart. It may be because the laws of nature have been violated that all those twins whose history has come down to us have been unhappy. In our case, see with what per-

sistency destiny pursues us. The hand of fate has interfered to annul your decision."

Laurence stood like one stupefied. These words, spoken by the directeur du jury and so fraught with sinister meaning for her, sounded in her ears like the buzzing of a swarm of bees.

"In the name of the emperor and the law! I arrest the Sieurs Paul-Marie and Marie-Paul de Simeuse, Robert and Adrien d'Hauteserre.—The gentlemen," he added, turning to his attendants and indicating the mud stains on the garments of the prisoners, "will not deny that a part of the day was spent by them in the saddle?"

"Of what are they accused?" Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne asked with a haughty air.

"Do you not arrest Mademoiselle?" suggested Giguët.

"I will accept bail for her appearance pending a fuller examination of the charges against her."

Goulard offered to give bail for her, simply asking from the Comtesse a promise that she would not attempt to escape. Laurence overwhelmed the former retainer of the House of Simeuse with a look of hauteur that made the man a lifelong enemy, and a tear dropped from his eyes, one of those tears that tell of a hell of torture. The four gentlemen exchanged a terrible look and remained motionless. M. and Mme. d'Hauteserre, in their uncertainty whether they had not been deceived by the four young men and Laurence, were in a condition of stupor that defies description. Those parents, who now beheld their children torn from them again after all the anguish they had endured on their account, after they had once regained them, sat as if rooted to their fauteuils, looking before them and seeing nothing, listening and hearing nothing.

"M. d'Hauteserre, must I ask you to go on my bail-bond?" cried Laurence to her former guardian, who was aroused from his lethargy by that cry which rang in his ears clear and shrill as the blast of the last trump.

The old man understood all. He wiped away the tears

that gathered in his eyes, and in a faint voice said to his young kinswoman:

"Forgive me, Comtesse. You know that I am yours, body and soul."

Lechesneau, at first not a little impressed by the tranquillity with which all those guilty persons were eating their dinner, reverted to his original impressions as to their guilt on beholding the stupor of the old folk and the meditative air of Laurence, who was trying to divine the nature of the trap that had been set for them.

"Messieurs," he said, very politely, "you are too much men of the world to make a resistance that would be futile. Please come with me, all four of you, to the stables, where it will be necessary to remove in your presence the shoes of your horses, which will be used as evidence at the trial and may serve to demonstrate your guilt or innocence.—Do you too come with us, Mademoiselle."

There was a blacksmith in Cinq-Cygne village who also acted on a pinch as veterinary; his presence and that of his apprentice had been requisitioned by Lechesneau in the capacity of experts. While operations were in progress at the stables, the juge de paix came in with Gothard and Michu. The operation of taking the shoes off all the horses, and marking and numbering them to enable a comparison with the hoofprints left in the park by the horses of the raiders, took time. Lechesneau, however, advised of Pigoult's arrival, left the accused with the gendarmes, returned to the dining-room to dictate the procès-verbal, and the juge de paix, while relating the circumstances of the arrest, called his attention to the condition of Michu's clothing.

"I've no doubt that they murdered the Senator and built him up in a wall," said Pigoult to Lechesneau in conclusion.

"I am beginning to fear, myself, that that is the case.—Where did you carry the plaster to?" the magistrate inquired, turning to Gothard.

Gothard began to cry.



"You officers of justice frighten him, poor boy," said Michu, whose eyes blazed like those of a lion caught in the toils.

At that point the servants of the house, who had been detained at the mairie, came straggling in; they crowded into the antechamber, where Catherine and the Durieus, amid tears and lamentations, apprised them of the terrible effect of the answers they had given. To all the questions of the directeur and the juge de paix Gothard replied by sobs; he cried so much that he worked himself up into something approaching a fit, which terrified them, and they left him to himself. The sly young rogue, on seeing that he was no longer watched, looked at Michu and grinned, and Michu grinned back approvingly. Lechesneau left the juge de paix and went to the stables to hurry the work of the experts.

"Monsieur," Mme. d'Hauteserre finally said, addressing Pigoult, "can you tell us the cause of these arrests?"

"The gentlemen are accused of laying violent hands on and abducting the Senator, and illegally restraining him of his liberty, for, notwithstanding appearances, we do not assert that they have murdered him."

"And to what penalty would the perpetrators of such a crime render themselves liable?" asked M. d'Hauteserre.

"Why, as the laws that are not specifically annulled by the provisions of the present Code remain in force, the penalty is death."

"The penalty is death!" cried Mme. d'Hauteserre, and fell to the floor in a dead faint.

At this juncture the curé presented himself with his sister, who summoned Catherine and the Durieu woman.

"But we haven't so much as set eyes on that cursed Senator of yours!" bawled Michu.

"Mme. Marion, Mme. Grévin, M. Grévin, the Senator's valet, and Violette, can't say the same of you," Pigoult replied with the sour smile of the magistrate whose mind is made up.

"I cannot understand it at all!" said Michu, on whom the other's words seemed to produce a stupefying effect, and who began to think that he was enmeshed with his masters in the toils of some vast conspiracy contrived for their destruction.

At this moment Lechesneau and all his party returned from the stables. Laurence hastened to the side of Mme. d'Hauteserre, who faintly said with her returning consciousness—

"The penalty is death!"

"Death!" echoed Laurence, looking at the four gentlemen.

The word caused widespread consternation, by which Giguët, Corentin's apt pupil, was not slow to profit.

"All may yet be arranged," said he, leading the Marquis de Simeuse apart to a corner of the dining-room. "Perhaps it is all a joke, after all? Zounds! You and I have smelled powder; between soldiers there should be fellow-feelings. What have you done with the Senator? If you have killed him, that ends the matter; but if you are keeping him in durance somewhere, give him up! You can see as well as I that your coup has missed fire. I am certain that the directeur du jury will unite with the Senator to quash all proceedings."

"Your questions are so much Greek to us, we don't understand the first word of them," replied the Marquis.

"If you are going to take that tone, the matter is likely to have serious consequences for you," said the lieutenant.

"Dear cousin," said the Marquis de Simeuse, turning to Laurence, "we are going to prison, but do not let it worry you; we shall return in a few hours. There is some misunderstanding here which it will be easy to explain away."

"I hope so, gentlemen, for your sake," said the magistrate, signing to Giguët to remove the four gentlemen, Gothard and Michu. "You will not take them to Troyes," he said to the lieutenant; "hold them at Arcis, in the station; they must be present early to-morrow morning

when the shoes removed from their horses are compared with the impressions left in the park."

Lechesneau and Pigoult did not take their departure until they had examined Catherine, M. and Mme. d'Hauteserre and Laurence. The Durieus, Catherine and Marthe declared that they had not seen their masters until breakfast time; M. d'Hauteserre, that he had seen them at three o'clock. When at midnight Laurence found herself in the salon with only M. and Mme. d'Hauteserre, the curé and his sister, without the four young men who for the last eighteen months had been her joy and pride, the life of the chateau, she long preserved a silence that no one ventured to disturb. Never was affliction deeper or more complete. At last a sigh was heard; all turned their eyes that way.

Marthe, forgotten in a corner, rose, saying—

"Death! Madame, they will have their lives, in spite of their innocence!"

"What have you done?" said the curé.

Laurence rose and silently left the room. She had need of solitude to regain her strength in the midst of that unforeseen disaster.

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### III

#### *A STATE TRIAL UNDER THE EMPIRE*

*A*T THIRTY-FOUR years' distance, in the course of which three great revolutions have occurred, only the very aged can recall to-day the tremendous sensation that was produced throughout Europe by the abduction of a Senator of the French Empire. No trial, with the exception, perhaps, of those of the widow Morin and Trumeau, the grocer of the Place Saint-Michel, under the Empire, of Fualdès and Castaing under the Restoration, and of Mme. Lafarge and Fieschi under the present government, ever began to equal in interest and curiosity that of the young men accused of kidnapping Malin. Such an



outrage committed upon the person of a member of his Senate aroused the wrath of the Emperor, to whom news of the perpetration of the offence, the barren results of the inquiries, and the arrest of the delinquents, came almost simultaneously. The forest had been searched in its deepest depths, the Aube and the neighboring departments had been scoured in all their length and breadth, without affording the faintest clew to the Comte de Gondreville, where he was or what had become of him, whether he were alive or dead. The Chief-Justice appeared in reply to a summons from the Emperor, having first been at pains to post himself in regard to the affair at the Ministry of Police, and explained to him Malin's position relative to the Simeuses. The Emperor, at that time much occupied with weighty matters, found the solution of the affair in the antecedent facts.

"Those young men are mad," said he. "A jurist like Malin would never acknowledge the validity of acts extorted from him by violence. Have those nobles watched, to see how they will go to work to release the Comte de Gondreville."

He gave orders to use the utmost diligence in an affair wherein he saw a purpose to disregard his favorite institutions, an indisposition to accept the teachings of the Revolution, an attack on the burning question of the national lands, and an obstacle in the way of that fusion of parties which was the constant preoccupation of his domestic policy. Finally, it seemed to him that those young men who had given him a solemn assurance that they would live peaceably had not kept their promise.

"What Fouché predicted has come to pass!" he exclaimed, recalling the phrase let fall two years previously by his present Minister of Police, who had only emitted it on the strength of Corentin's report concerning Laurence.

Under a constitutional government, in which it is impossible for any one to feel the least interest in the affairs of a cold, indifferent, ungrateful, blind and dumb régime, one cannot conceive the zeal that a single word from the

Emperor imparted to his political and administrative machine. That tremendous will seemed to infuse itself into things as well as men. Once his word spoken, the Emperor, on whom the coalition of 1806 came as a surprise, forgot the affair of the abduction. He was planning fresh campaigns, and massing his regiments in readiness for a decisive blow at the heart of the Prussian monarchy; but his desire to see justice promptly done found a powerful auxiliary in the uncertain tenure by which all the magistrates of the Empire held their places. At the present time Cambacérès, in his capacity as Lord Chancellor, and Régnier, the Chief-Justice, were preparing their scheme providing for the establishment of Tribunals of First Instance, Imperial Courts, and the Court of Cassation; they were discussing the subject of costumes and uniforms, to which Napoleon with reason attached such importance; they were revising the lists of the personnel, and hunting up forms and precedents in the musty records of the abolished parliaments. It was only natural that the magistrates of the department of the Aube should think that a manifestation of zeal in the matter of the Comte de Gondreville's abduction would be a first-class recommendation for them. The suppositions of Napoleon thus became certainties in the eyes of the courtiers and the masses.

Peace still reigned upon the Continent, and in France the love and admiration for the Emperor were unbounded; he flattered interests, vanities, men, things, everything, in short, even to dead memories. Any resort to violence, therefore, appeared to everybody to be a blow aimed directly at the general welfare. The poor, innocent gentlemen, consequently, were covered with universal opprobrium. Few in number and confined to their estates, the nobles deplored the affair among themselves, but not one of them dared open his mouth. Of what use would it have been for them, indeed, to attempt to breast the overwhelming tide of public opinion? Throughout the entire department men were exhuming the corpses of the eleven persons slain in 1792 from

the windows of the Hotel Cinq-Cygne, and using them in their philippics to the detriment of the accused. They professed to fear that the émigrés, emboldened by impunity, would resort to violent methods against the present possessors of their estates, and by a bloody protest try to force restitution of the property of which they had, as they claimed, been illegally despoiled. The four gentlemen, therefore, were everywhere reviled as brigands, robbers, murderers, and Michu's connection with the case was particularly unfortunate for them. That unhappy man, who was held responsible, either personally or vicariously through his father-in-law, for every head that fell in the department during the Terror, was the object of the most ridiculous stories. The exasperation was the more general that almost all the functionaries of the Aube had owed their appointment to Malin. No generous voice was raised to contradict the voice of public calumny. Finally, the unfortunate young men had no legal means of combating prejudice and securing an impartial trial for themselves, for the Code of Brumaire, year IV., while submitting to separate juries the primary investigation and subsequent trial of the case, had withheld from the accused the all-important right of appealing to a higher court in the event of a suspicion of unfairness. On the second day after the arrest the inmates of the chateau of Cinq-Cygne, masters and servants, were summoned to appear before the jury d'accusation. Cinq-Cygne was left in charge of the head farmer, under the supervision of the Abbé Goujet and his sister, who made it their residence temporarily. Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne, with M. and Mme. d'Hautesserre, came into Troyes and occupied the small house that Durieu owned in one of the long, wide faubourgs of the city. Laurence, like many another, was made to suffer by the petty indignities that are invariably heaped on the relatives of persons implicated in a criminal affair in the provincial towns where they are tried, and beholding the blind fury of the masses, the malignity of the bourgeoisie and the hostility of the



administration, she was sick at heart. Instead of reassuring, compassionate words there were thinly veiled conversations that only half concealed a horrid lust for vengeance; in place of acts of common civility or that reserve which decency imposes, there were manifestations of hatred and aversion; but, above all, there was that isolation which all created beings feel so keenly, and which is felt all the more quickly that misfortune makes men jealous and exacting. Laurence, who had recovered her strength, was counting on the lights of innocence to dispel the shadows, and cared too little for the opinion of the multitude to be much troubled by the silent disapproval with which she was received. She did what she could to keep up M. and Mme. d'Hauteserre's courage, thinking meanwhile of that judicial battle which, if the activity of the lawyers was any indication, would soon be won or lost in the criminal court. But there was a blow in preparation that she had not expected, and that was to test her nerve.

In the midst of all this adversity, in this loosening of the floodgates of evil passions, at the moment when this sorely tried family saw itself, as it were, alone in the midst of a cheerless desert, a Man rose suddenly in grandeur before Laurence's eyes and displayed the beauty of his character. On the day succeeding that on which the indictment, approved by the customary formula, "Yes, there are sufficient grounds," scribbled by the foreman of the jury at the bottom of the document, was returned to the public prosecutor, and the warrant issued for the accused had assumed the force of an order for their detention, the Marquis de Chargebœuf called for his old rattle-trap calèche and courageously came to the succor of his young relative. The head of that great family, foreseeing the prompt action of the authorities, had hurried up to Paris whence he returned bringing with him one of the adroitest and most reliable attorneys of those times, Bordin, who for ten years represented the interests of the nobility at Paris, and whose successor was the celebrated lawyer, Derville. This worthy prac-

itioner immediately selected as his associate counsel the grandson of a former president of the parliament of Normandy, who was fitting himself for the magistracy and whose studies had been conducted under Bordin's supervision. This young advocate—to employ a style that had become obsolete but which the Emperor was presently to revive—was, in fact, after the present trial, appointed substitute to the procureur-général at Paris, and afterward became one of our most celebrated magistrates. M. de Granville accepted his retainer as affording him an opportunity of making his *début* with *éclat*. At that time official counsel supplied the place of advocates, so that the defendant could not be said to be deprived of his right to be represented by counsel; any citizen might plead the cause of innocence, but accused persons none the less generally engaged the old-time advocates for their defence. The old Marquis, shocked by the ravages that distress and mental suffering had produced in Laurence's appearance, displayed admirable tactfulness and good breeding. He never once said, "I told you so!" He presented Bordin as an oracle whose instructions were to be followed to the letter, and young de Granville as a defender worthy of all their confidence.

Laurence gave her hand to the old Marquis and returned his clasp with a cordiality that charmed him.

"You were right," said she.

"Will you be guided now by my advice?" he asked.

The young Comtesse intimated that she would, as did M. and Mme. d'Hautesserre.

"Very well; then come and make your residence with me. My house is centrally located, in the immediate vicinity of the court house; you and your lawyers will be more comfortable there than here, where you are too crowded, and entirely too far from the field of battle. You would have to traverse the entire city every day."

Laurence accepted his offer. The old man conducted her, as well as Mme. d'Hautesserre, to his house, where they and their counsel found a home as long as the trial lasted. After

dinner, behind closed doors, Bordin had Laurence give him a circumstantial account of the whole affair, omitting no single detail, notwithstanding that most of the particulars had already been communicated to Bordin and his young associate by the Marquis during their journey from Paris to Troyes. Bordin listened, his feet stretched out to the fire, in an easy and unassuming attitude. As for the young lawyer, if he now and then allowed his admiration for Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne to interfere for a moment with the strict attention which it was his duty to give to the case, it was not altogether his fault.

"Is that all?" Bordin asked when Laurence had related all the events of the drama as this narrative has presented them down to the present moment.

"Yes," she replied.

The profoundest silence reigned for some moments in the salon of the Hotel de Chargeboeuf, in which was passing this scene, one of the most solemn as well as the rarest that can happen in a lifetime. Every case is tried by the lawyers before it comes under the cognizance of the judges, just as the sick man's fate is passed on by the doctors, in advance of the conflict they will have to sustain, in the one case with justice, in the other with death. The eyes of all, Laurence, M. and Mme. d'Hauteserre and the Marquis, were fixed intently on the dark and wrinkled smallpox-pitted face of the old attorney, who was about to utter words importing life or death. M. d'Hauteserre wiped the beads of perspiration from his forehead. Laurence glanced at the young lawyer's face; what she saw there was not encouraging.

"Well, my dear Bordin?" said the Marquis, offering his snuffbox, from which the other absently took a pinch.

Bordin thoughtfully rubbed the calves of his legs protected by thick black cotton stockings, for he was in black small-clothes and wore a coat somewhat resembling the garment known as *habit à la Française*. He turned his little shrewd eyes on his clients, but the small room for hope they saw there sent a chill through them.



"Do you want me to go to the bottom of the affair," he asked, "and deal frankly by you?"

"Proceed, Monsieur," said Laurence.

"All that you have done with the best intentions will be made ground of accusation against you," the aged practitioner went on. "It will be impossible to get your relatives off free; the most that can be done is to try for a mitigation of their punishment. Your having advised Michu to sell his property will be regarded as undeniable proof of your criminal intentions toward the Senator. You sent your people away to Troyes expressly that you might be alone, and that will appear so much the more plausible that it is the truth. The elder of the d'Hauteserre brothers made an ill-considered speech to Beauvisage, which will be the ruin of you all. And you made another in your courtyard, which long ago proved the enmity you cherished against Gondreville. As for you, you were seen watching at the gate at the very moment of the attempt. If they refrain from prosecuting you, it will be simply to avoid introducing an element of romantic interest into the case."

"The defence does not appear to have a leg to stand on!" said M. de Granville.

"It is the weaker," Bordin continued, "that it is impossible to tell all the truth. Michu and the MM. d'Hauteserre and de Simeuse will have to confine their testimony to a simple deposition that they were with you in the forest during a portion of the day, and breakfasted with you at Cinq-Cygne. But, granting that we can prove the fact that you were all there at three o'clock, the hour at which the raid occurred, who are our witnesses? Marthe, wife of one of the defendants; Catherine and the Durieus, servants in your employ; Monsieur and Madame, father and mother of other two of the defendants. Those witnesses are unavailable; the law excuses them from testifying against you, the court in its discretion will refuse to hear their testimony in your favor. And if, prompted by some evil genius, you should say that you went to the forest to gather in eleven hundred thousand

francs in gold, you would surely send all the accused to the galleys as highway robbers. The public prosecutor, the judges, the jury, the audience, all France, would believe that you got the money at Gondreville and spirited the Senator away in order to bag your spoil. The affair is not particularly clear, taking the indictment as it is; but look at it once in that other aspect and it becomes limpid, clear as day. The jury will explain away every doubtful point by the theory of robbery, for to say Royalist at the present day is as who should say brigand! The case may be accounted for on the ground of a vengeance not incompatible with the present condition of political affairs. The accused are liable to the penalty of death, but that is not a disgrace in everybody's eyes; while if you allow the case to be complicated by a charge of appropriating some other person's money, which will never be considered a strictly legitimate proceeding, you will lose the benefit of that popular sympathy which almost invariably accrues to those condemned to death for a crime for which there appears to be some palliating motive. In the beginning, when, to account for how you spent your day, you could have shown the holes in the ground, the plan of the forest, the tin boxes, the gold, it might have been possible to secure an acquittal before impartial magistrates; but, as matters stand now, our best policy will be to keep silence. God grant that none of the accused has said or done anything to compromise the case, but we will try our best to get some good out of their examination."

Laurence wrung her hands and raised her eyes to heaven with a despairing look, for she saw in all its horrid depth the pit into which her cousins had fallen. The Marquis and the young lawyer gave their tacit approval to Bordin's unanswerable argument. M. d'Hauteserre shed tears.

"Why could you not have listened to Abbé Goujet's advice when he begged and prayed them to fly?" Mme. d'Hauteserre asked with some acerbity.

"Ah!" exclaimed the old attorney, "if you had it in your power to save them and did not do so, you will have

slain them with your own hands! A sentence *in contumaciam* gives time, and with time the innocent can straighten out affairs. This strikes me as about the ugliest, most mixed-up mess that I have seen in all my life, and yet I have unravelled not a few of them in my time."

"It is beyond all human comprehension, even ours," said M. de Granville. "If the accused are innocent, some other persons must have done the job. Five men don't drop down into a place as if by enchantment, they don't procure for themselves horses with shoes the exact counterparts of those on the horses of the accused, they don't hide Malin in the coal-hole and disguise themselves in the likenesses of Michu and the MM. de Simeuse and d'Hauteserre with no other purpose than to make mischief for those gentlemen. The strangers, the real guilty ones, must have had a motive of some sort for investing themselves in the skin of those five innocent ones. In order to discover them, to get on their track, we should need to be placed on an equal footing with the government, and have as many agents and eyes as there are communes in a radius of twenty leagues."

"That is impossible," Bordin replied; "it is not to be thought of even. Since the time when justice was first invented by social organizations, they have never devised a plan whereby accused innocence shall be given a power equal to that which is wielded by the magistrate against crime. Justice is not bilateral. The defence, which has no police force, no detectives, is not permitted to place the resources of the State at the disposal of its clients. Innocence has only the persuasive power of oratory at its command, and the reasoning which may impress the judges as frequently as not produces no effect whatever on the prejudiced minds of the jury. The whole country is against you. The eight jurors who gave their sanction to the indictment were all proprietors of national lands, and on the trial jury we shall have a set of men who, like the others, will be either traffickers in national property or employés of government. In a word, we shall have a pro-Malin jury! A thorough, well-con-



sidered plan of defence will be necessary; once it is adopted, stick to it, and make up your minds to perish in your innocence. You will be brought in guilty. We will carry the case up to the tribunal of cassation, and keep it there as long as we are able. If, in the interim, I should discover new evidence in your favor, an application for pardon will be in order. There you have the anatomy of the affair and what I think of it. If we should win (for it is often the unexpected that happens in courts of justice), it would be a miracle; but of all the advocates I know there is none more capable than yours of performing that miracle, and I will do what I can to help him."

"The Senator must have the key to the enigma," said M. de Granville, "for we always have an inkling of who are our enemies and the reason of their being so. What could he mean by leaving Paris at the end of winter, coming to Gondreville alone and unattended, shutting himself up there with his notary, and surrendering himself, as one may say, to five men who work their will on him?"

"His conduct," replied Bordin, "is certainly, to say the least, as unaccountable as ours; but how, with the whole country up in arms against us, are we to change our ground and from accused become accusers? We should need the friendly co-operation, the active assistance of the government, and evidence a thousand times more convincing than on any ordinary occasion. I see premeditation, of the deepest, most deliberate sort, on the part of our unknown adversaries, who were acquainted with Michu's and the MM. de Simeuse's situation relatively to Malin. Oh! they were prudent—not a word spoken, not a thing stolen! I see beneath those masks other faces than those of professional robbers. But it would not be wise to say such things to the jury that will be given us!"

This profound insight into the secret motives that determine men's actions which makes certain lawyers and judges so great surprised and confounded Laurence. The lawyer's terrible logic seemed to be tugging at her heart-strings.

"Out of a hundred criminal cases," Bordin continued, "there are probably not ten of which justice ever succeeds in getting at the bottom, and perhaps one-third of them always remain more or less shrouded in mystery. Yours is of the number of those which are unfathomable alike to the lawyers on both sides, to justice and the public. As for our sovereign master, he has other matters to attend to than to interfere in behalf of the MM. de Simeuse, even if they had not taken a hand in the attempt to overthrow him. But who the devil is Malin's enemy? and what did they mean to do with him?"

Bordin and M. de Granville looked at each other; they seemed to question Laurence's veracity. This was one of the bitterest of the many humiliations to which the young girl was subjected during the trial; she gave the lawyers a look which put an end to their injurious suspicions.

The next day the counsel for the defence were furnished with a copy of the minutes of the proceedings and allowed to have communication with the prisoners. Bordin informed the family, in the phrase sanctioned by long usage, that the defendants, as became their quality, "were carrying themselves manfully."

"M. de Granville will appear for Michu," said Bordin.

"Michu—?" exclaimed M. de Chargebœuf, astonished by the change of programme.

"He is the heart of the affair, there's where the danger lies," replied the old lawyer.

"The decision strikes me as just, if he is most in danger!" exclaimed Laurence.

"We think we see some glimmerings of light," said M. de Granville, "and we are going to look into them carefully. If we succeed in securing an acquittal it will be because M. d'Hauteserre directed Michu to repair a post of the fence in the sunken road and told him that he had seen a wolf in the forest: for in a criminal trial everything depends on the pleadings, and the pleadings hinge on trivial matters that you will see become immensely important."

Laurence gave way to that discouragement and mental depression which benumb the faculties of every person of thought and action when it is made clear to him that thought and action can be of no further use. It was no longer a question of hurling a man from power and overturning a dynasty with the assistance of devoted men, of fanatical sympathies shrouded in the shadows of mystery: she saw the whole of society banded against her and her cousins. One cannot well storm a jail, unassisted and alone, and release the prisoners in the midst of a hostile population, under the eyes of a police made doubly vigilant by the alleged audacity of the accused. So, when the young lawyer, alarmed by the stupor of the noble and generous girl, who appeared even more stupid yet owing to her facial peculiarities, attempted to cheer her and put fresh courage into her, she made answer to him:

"I am silent, I suffer, and I wait."

The accent, the look and gesture that accompanied these words made them one of those sublime utterances which only need a wider stage to make them world-famous. A few minutes later old d'Hauterrie was saying to the Marquis de Chargebœuf:

"To think of the trouble I have been at for those two luckless boys of mine! I have already put by in government securities enough nearly to give them an income of eight thousand livres. If they had only been willing to enter the service they would be well up on the army list by this time, and might marry women with lots of money. And now all my hopes are dashed to the ground!"

"How can you think of their material interests," exclaimed his wife, "when their honor is at stake and their life in danger!"

"M. d'Hauterrie thinks of everything," said the Marquis.

While the Cinq-Cygne people were fruitlessly soliciting permission to see the prisoners and awaiting the beginning of the trial in the Criminal Court, an event of the greatest



importance was occurring in the privacy of the chateau. Marthe had returned to Cinq-Cygne immediately after appearing before the jury d'accusation and giving her testimony, which was so unimportant that the public prosecutor did not consider it worth while to subpoena her for the trial. The poor woman had lapsed into a state of pitiable stupor; she sat all day long in the salon, keeping Mlle. Goujet company. To her, as well as to the curé and all those who did not know how the accused had spent their day, their innocence appeared doubtful. At times Marthe was persuaded that Michu, his masters and Laurence had executed some scheme of vengeance on the Senator. The unhappy woman was sufficiently acquainted with the quality of Michu's blind devotion to feel sure that, of all the accused, he stood in greatest danger, as well because of his antecedents as of the share he had doubtless borne in the present enterprise. The Abbé Goujet, his sister and Marthe were all at sea among the probabilities to which this opinion gave rise, but after protracted meditation they allowed their mind to settle upon a meaning of some sort. The condition of absolute doubt demanded by Descartes is as little obtainable in the brain of man as is a vacuum in nature, and the mental operation by which it might be induced would be, like the action of the air-pump, an unnatural and exceptional situation. Whatever may be the subject under consideration, we always have a belief of some kind. Now, Marthe's fear and dread of the guilt of the accused were so great that her fears became belief, and that mental state was disastrous to her. One evening about ten o'clock, five days after the gentlemen's arrest, just as she was making ready for bed, she was summoned to the courtyard by her mother, who had come in from the farm on foot.

"A workingman of Troyes wishes to have a word with you," she said to Marthe; "he is sent by Michu, and is waiting for you in the sunken road."

The two women went by way of the gap as being the directest route. The obscurity in the sunken road was such

that Marthe could distinguish nothing save the shadowy outlines of a man's form almost confounded with the blackness of the foliage.

"Speak, madame, that I may be assured that you are Mme. Michu and not another," said this person in a voice which told that he was ill at ease.

"Certainly," Marthe replied. "And what is your will?"

"It is well," said the stranger. "Give me your hand, you have no cause to fear me. I am come," he added, bending over and speaking in Marthe's ear, "to give you a message from Michu. I am one of the employés of the jail, and if my superiors should discover my absence we should all be lost. You may trust me. Your good father got me my place there long ago, and that is why Michu selected me for this service."

He placed a letter in Marthe's hand, and, without waiting for an answer, disappeared in the direction of the forest. Marthe shivered slightly as she reflected that now, doubtless, the great mystery was about to be made clear to her. She ran with her mother at full speed to the farmhouse, and locking herself in a room, sat down and read the following letter:

"MY DEAR MARTHE—You can rely on the discretion of the bearer of this letter, he can neither read nor write. He was with us in the Babeuf conspiracy and is a strong Republican; your father often made use of him, and he regards the Senator as a traitor. Now, my dear wife, I must tell you that the Senator has been safely bestowed by us in the cavern where the masters were concealed once on a time. The poor man was only given provender for five days, and as it is very much our interest that he should live, as soon as you have read this scrap of writing carry him victuals sufficient to last him for at least another five days. The forest will undoubtedly be watched; observe the same precautions that we used to observe for our young masters. Don't speak to Malin, don't lisp a word to him, and put on

one of our masks; you'll find them on the cellar steps. Unless you wish to imperil both our heads, you will preserve the strictest silence in relation to this secret that I am compelled to trust you with. Don't breathe a word of it to Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne, she might give us away. You need have no fear for me. The affair is sure to come out all right, and when the time comes Malin himself will be our savior. Finally, I need not tell you to burn this letter as soon as you have read it, for should a single line of it be seen it might cost me my head. I send you a thousand kisses.

MICHU."

The existence of the cavern situated under the bluff in the middle of the forest was known only to Marthe, her son, Michu, the four gentlemen and Laurence: at least that was what Marthe believed, to whom her husband had said nothing of his encounter with Peyrade and Corentin. Thus the letter, of which moreover the handwriting and signature appeared to her to be Michu's, could have come from no one but him. It is certain that if Marthe had gone at once and taken counsel with her mistress and her two advisers, who knew the innocence of the accused, the shrewd attorney would have had his eyes opened to the web of perfidy that had been woven about his clients; but Marthe, acting, as women generally do, on the impulse of the moment, and controlled by considerations which appeared to her self-evident, threw the letter into the fire. Actuated, however, by a passing and, for her, unusual access of prudence, she rescued from the flames a portion of the letter before it was consumed; it contained the opening lines, in which there was nothing that could compromise anybody, and she sewed the paper into the skirt of her gown. A little scared by the reflection that the successor of the old monks had been fasting for four-and-twenty hours, she determined to take him bread, meat and wine that same night. Her curiosity, perhaps, as well as her humanity, had something to do with deciding her not to postpone her good deed until the mor-



row. She heated her oven and with her mother's assistance concocted a duck-and-rabbit pie and a rice cake, baked with her own hands two round loaves of bread, roasted a pair of fowls, and brought up from the cellar three bottles of wine. It was about half after two in the morning when she started for the forest, carrying her provender in a great hamper and accompanied by Couraut, who, on expeditions of this nature, was unsurpassed as a scout and bodyguard. He detected the presence of strangers at incredible distances and, when satisfied of their proximity, would return to his mistress, uttering low growls and keeping his eyes fixed on the quarter where danger threatened.

Marthe reached the pond about three o'clock and left Couraut there to do sentry duty. After a half hour of labor devoted to uncovering the entrance, she stood before the door of the vault, in her hand a dark lantern, her face shielded by a mask which, as her husband had intimated, she had found upon the cellar steps. The Senator's seclusion seemed to have been prearranged long in advance. A hole about a foot square that Marthe had not seen there previously had been roughly cut in the upper portion of the iron door that closed the vault; but in order that Malin, with the time and patience of which prisoners have such abundance, might not lift from its sockets the wooden bar that held the door in place, it had been fastened with a padlock. The Senator, who had risen from his bed of moss, sighed wearily on beholding a masked face; he perceived that the time was not yet come for his deliverance. He observed his visitor as well as he could by the fitful light of the dark lantern, and recognized her by her garments, her corpulence and movements; when she passed the pie in through the opening he dropped it to grasp her hands, and made a vigorous effort to force from her finger two rings, her wedding-ring and a little circlet given her by Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne.

"You will not attempt to deny your identity, my dear Madame Michu?" said he.

Marthe doubled up her fist as soon as she felt the contact of the Senator's fingers and gave him a sturdy blow on the chest. Then, without a word said, she went and cut a suitably strong branch and on the end of it handed him the remainder of the provisions.

"What do they mean to do with me?" he asked.

Marthe moved away without vouchsafing him an answer. On her return, about five o'clock, she found herself on the edge of the forest and was warned by Couraut of the presence of an intruder. She turned and retraced her steps in the direction of the pavilion where she had lived so long; but when she came out upon the avenue she was descried from a distance by the garde champetre of Gondreville. She adopted the course of taking the bull by the horns and going straight up to him.

"You are early abroad this morning, Madame Michu!" said he as she came up with him.

"We are so unfortunate as to be without a servant, and I am forced to do the work of one," she replied. "I am on my way to Bellache to get some garden seeds."

"Have you no seed at Cinq-Cygne?" inquired the garde.

Marthe made no answer. She continued on her way, and on reaching Bellache asked Beauvisage to oblige her with several different kinds of seeds, adding that M. d'Hauteserre wished to change the varieties in his garden and had instructed her to get them. Soon after she had left, the garde from Gondreville came to the farm to find out what had been Marthe's business there. Six days later Marthe, become more prudent, selected midnight as the hour for taking the provisions, in order to escape the observation of the guards that were evidently set to watch the forest. After she had a third time conveyed food to the Senator, she was seized with something approaching terror on hearing the curé read aloud the newspaper account of the public examination of the accused, for by that time the trial had begun. She took the Abbé Goujet aside, and, after

swearing him to secrecy as to her revelations no less than if she were confessing to him, produced the charred remnants of the letter she had received from Michu, informed him of its purport, and let him into the secret of the Senator's place of confinement. The curé immediately asked Marthe if she had any letters from her husband that would enable him to verify the writing. Marthe went home to the farm, in pursuance of this request, and found awaiting her there a subpoena to appear as a witness before the court. On her return to the chateau she found that Abbé Goujet and his sister had also been subpoenaed on behalf of the accused. All were obliged, therefore, immediately to undertake the journey to Troyes. Thus all the actors in this drama, even to those who played the minor parts, found themselves reassembled on the stage where the destinies of the two families were to be decided.

In France the localities are few and far between where justice is at pains to borrow from inanimate objects a portion of that prestige which should always accompany it. What greater social mechanism is there, after religion and royalty? Everywhere, in Paris even, the inconvenience of the public buildings, entirely unadapted to their purpose, their out-of-the-way location and unclean surroundings, their nudity, the total absence of all attempt at appropriate decoration, in a nation than which no country on the face of the earth makes louder claim to artistic pre-eminence, detract enormously from the influence of that great engine of civilization. In almost all towns and cities the arrangement is the same. At the furthest end of a long, rectangular room one sees a desk covered with green cloth, raised on a platform, behind which are seated the judges on common, tawdry fauteuils. To the left is the seat of the public prosecutor, and on the same side, parallel with the wall, a long inclosed space or box, filled with chairs, for the jury. Facing the jury is another box, in which there is a wooden bench, on which sit the accused and the gendarmes, their guardians. The clerk of the court has his place just under



the raised platform, at a table on which are arrayed the legal documents pertaining to the case that is being argued. Before the introduction of the imperial system of procedure, the government commissary and the directeur du jury each had a chair and table, one on the right and the other on the left of the judges' desk. Two court attendants move to and fro in the vacant space at one side of the clerk's table, where the witnesses stand to give their testimony. Counsel for the defence have chairs placed for them immediately under the prisoners' dock. A wooden balustrade, about half-way down the room, connecting the dock and the jury-box, forms an inclosure in which are benches reserved for witnesses who have testified and certain privileged spectators. Then, facing the judges and directly over the door of entrance, there is always a dirty, unsavory gallery, closed to all except the authorities and such women as may chance to enjoy the acquaintance of the president, upon whom devolves the policing of the audience. The general public is at liberty to stand in the space that is left between the outer door and the balustrade. This, the normal appearance of French tribunals and assize courts of the present day, was that of the criminal court of Troyes.

In April, 1806, neither the president and four judges who constituted the court, nor the public prosecutor, nor the directeur du jury, nor the commissary of the government, nor the attendants, nor counsel, nor anybody, in fact, the gendarmes excepted, wore any special costume or distinctive emblem to give a little life and color to the nakedness of the room and the not very imposing array of persons in it. The crucifix was missing, and was not there to afford its salutary lesson to either judges or defendants. Everything was repulsive, cheerless and commonplace. That decent ostentation, which is so helpful in the cause of social order, perhaps affords a little comfort to the criminal. The morbid interest exhibited by the populace was what it has always been, what it always will be, on occasions of this nature, so long as there is no reform in manners, so long as

France neglects to recognize the fact that public admission to the hearings does not of necessity imply publicity, and that the publicity given to the proceedings constitutes a penalty of such barbarous severity that, if the legislator had suspected the result, he would never have inserted it in the Code. Customs are often more cruel than the laws. Customs are the men of flesh and blood, the law is the concrete reason of a country. Customs, which often are devoid of reason, are stronger than the law. Men and women came flocking around the court-house in droves. As is usual in trials of such importance, the president was obliged to call on the commander of the garrison for troops to guard the doors. The audience behind the balustrade was so closely packed that the people came near smothering. M. de Granville appeared for Michu, M. Bordin for the MM. de Simeuse, and a lawyer of Troyes was to plead the cause of MM. d'Hauteserre and Gothard, the least compromised of the six defendants. They were at their post in good season, before the opening of the court, with faces indicative of quiet confidence. As the physician is careful not to exhibit his apprehensions before his patient, so in like manner the lawyer always shows a hopeful face to his client. This is one of those rare cases when hypocrisy becomes a virtue.

When the accused were conducted to their places, there rose a general murmur of approval at sight of the four young men who, during their captivity of twenty days passed in no very comfortable frame of mind, had lost a little of their color. The perfect resemblance between the twins aroused the liveliest interest. Perhaps the beholders thought that nature owed it to one of her choicest rarities to exert a special protection over them, and every one felt like doing something to atone for the unkindness with which destiny had treated them. Their noble, frank and simple countenance, whereon there was no trace visible of either fear or of bravado, appealed particularly to the women. The four gentlemen and Gothard appeared in the clothes that they were wearing when arrested, but Michu, whose

garments were to be used as an "exhibit" in the trial, had donned his best attire: a blue frockcoat, a brown velvet waistcoat à la Robespierre, and a white cravat. The poor man was made to pay for the unattractiveness of his appearance. Whenever he changed his position or allowed his bright, piercing, yellow eyes to wander over the assemblage, he was greeted with a suppressed murmur of repulsion. The audience chose to see the finger of God in his appearance on the prisoners' bench, on which so many innocent persons had sat in the past, owing to the machinations of his father-in-law. The man, truly great in his way, repressed a bitter smile as he looked at his masters. He seemed to say to them, "You see I am not of much assistance to your cause!" These five defendants exchanged pleasant salutations with their counsel. Gothard persisted in acting the part of an idiot.

When the jury was finally impanelled, after a prudent exercise of their right of challenge by the counsel for the defence—to assist whom in this part of their duty the Marquis de Chargebœuf came and courageously took a seat beside MM. Bordin and de Granville—and the indictment read, the accused were separated preparatory to proceeding with their examination. All displayed remarkable unanimity in their answers. After taking horseback exercise in the park during the morning, they had returned at one o'clock to breakfast at Cinq-Cygne; after the repast, from three o'clock until half-past five, they had betaken themselves again to the forest. When the president asked the MM. de Simeuse to explain what had taken them abroad at such an early hour, they both declared that since their return they had been thinking of buying back Gondreville, and, supposing they should have dealings with Malin, who had come down the day before, they had ridden out with their cousin and Michu to inspect the forest, with the purpose of acquiring such information as would enable them to treat intelligently. While they were thus engaged the MM. d'Hauteserre, their cousin and Gothard had been hunting a



wolf that the peasants had sighted. If the directeur du jury had used the same zeal in following up the trail of their horses in the forest that he had shown in investigating the tracks left by those which had crossed the park of Gondreville, he would have had abundant proof that their ride that day had taken them to regions far distant from the chateau.

The examination of the MM. d'Hauteserre tallied with that of the MM. de Simeuse, and agreed with the statements made by them at the preliminary inquiry. The necessity of accounting in some way for their prolonged absence from the chateau had suggested to each of the defendants the idea of attributing it to the chase. Some peasants had started a wolf in the forest a few days previously, and they all availed themselves of this circumstance as a pretext.

However, the public prosecutor called the attention of the court to certain discrepancies between the preliminary inquiry, in which the MM. d'Hauteserre stated that they were all hunting in company, and the hypothesis adduced at the open hearing, which left the MM. d'Hauteserre and Laurence hunting while the MM. de Simeuse were making an appraisal of the forest.

To this M. de Granville replied that as the crime imputed to his clients had been committed between the hours of two and half-past five, credence should be given to the accused when they explained how they had passed the morning.

The prosecutor rejoined that it was of the highest importance to the prisoners to conceal their preparations for disposing of the Senator after his abduction.

The adroitness of the defence was apparent to every one. Judges, jury and audience saw that if the prosecution gained the day it would be only after a hotly contested battle. Bordin and M. de Granville seemed to have foreseen every point. Innocence is expected to give a clear and plausible account of its actions. The duty of counsel for the defence, therefore, is to set up a probable romance against the im-

probable romance of the prosecution. For the defending counsel, who regards his client as innocent, the accusation becomes a fable. Upon the whole, the result of the public examination of the four gentlemen was favorable to them. So far all was well. But Michu's examination was a more serious business; here the combat began in earnest. Everybody saw then why M. de Granville had elected to defend the servant in preference to the masters.

Michu confessed to having threatened Marion, but denied having used the violent expressions charged against him. As for his alleged attempt to shoot Malin from ambush, he asserted that he was simply walking in the park; the Senator and M. Grévin must have been alarmed at sight of the muzzle of his gun, and imputed to him hostile intentions instead of the perfectly peaceful ones that he was actuated by. He said that in the twilight it was possible for a man unaccustomed to the use of firearms to think that a gun was aimed at him when it was resting quietly on its owner's shoulder. To account for the condition of his clothing at the time of his arrest, he declared that he had fallen into the moat as he was returning home.

"It was too dark to see well what I was about," said he, "and I had a little difficulty, as you may say, with the stones, which gave way under me when I attempted, with their assistance, to lift myself up into the sunken road."

As for the plaster that Gothard had carried to him, he maintained, as he had done at his previous examination, that he had used it to reset one of the posts of the fence in the sunken road.

The public prosecutor and the president called on him to explain how he could have been at the same time in the gap at the chateau and up in the sunken road resetting a post of the fence, especially as the juge de paix, the gendarmes and the garde champêtre declared that they had heard him approaching from below. Michu's answer was that M. d'Hauteserre had scolded him for not having sooner made those

trifling repairs, which he was desirous of having completed because of a threatened litigation between him and the commune; he (Michu) had therefore gone at once to inform him that the fence was mended.

It was true that M. d'Hauteserre had had a fence built at the top of the sunken road in order to estop the commune from acquiring title to the lane by adverse possession. Michu, seeing the importance that attached to the condition of his clothing, and the plaster that he could not deny having used, invented this rigmarole yarn to befog the issue. If, in the affairs of justice, truth often resembles fable, fable, also, is often very much like truth. The prosecution and the defence both attached great importance to this circumstance, about which, owing to the suspicions of the prosecutor and the efforts of the opposing counsel to allay them, the conflict was carried on with great animation.

On being questioned Gothard, with whom M. de Granville had doubtless been having a little private conversation, confessed that Michu had requested him to bring him some bags of plaster. Until then he had always had recourse to tears the moment a question was asked him.

"Why did not one of you, you or Gothard, take the juge de paix and the garde champêtre to look at the fence at the time?" asked the public prosecutor.

"I never supposed that there was a likelihood of our being placed on trial for our life," Michu replied.

All the accused except Gothard were made to leave the room. When the young man was left without the moral support of his fellow-prisoners, the president addressed him, advising him to abandon his policy of pretended idiocy, which deceived nobody, and urging him in his own interest to tell the truth. None of the jurymen believed that he was weak-minded. If he persisted in his silence he would expose himself to severe punishment, while a frank and full confession would doubtless secure him his liberty. Gothard cried, hesitated, shuffled. Finally he said that Michu had asked him to bring him several bags of plaster, but that on



each occasion he had met him in front of the farmhouse. He was asked how many bags he had brought.

"Three," he replied.

Here a discussion arose between Gothard and Michu as to whether the number was three, counting the one that the lad was bringing at the moment of the arrest, which would reduce the number of bags to two, or three in addition to the last. The discussion ended in Michu's favor. The jury appeared to be satisfied that only two bags were used; their belief indeed seemed to amount to a conviction, but Bordin and M. de Granville considered it necessary to cram them with plaster, to stuff it down their throats, and so nauseate, weary and befuddle them with the article that they were utterly incapable of further comprehension. M. de Granville closed with a request that experts be appointed to examine the condition of the fence.

"The directeur du jury," said he, "went to the place and made a perfunctory examination, not so much with the purpose of getting at the facts as of discovering some trickery on Michu's part. In our opinion, however, he was negligent in the performance of his duty, and his remissness will inure to our advantage."

The court ruled that experts should be appointed to determine whether one of the posts of the fence had been recently reset. The public prosecutor, however, wished to have the point decided without waiting for the experts' report.

"You did the work all by yourself," he said to Michu, "and selected an hour, between half-past five and half-past six, when it was no longer light?"

"M. d'Hauteserre had scolded me!"

"But if you used the plaster on the fence," the prosecutor continued, "you must have had a trowel and a hod. Now, if you came with such speed to inform M. d'Hauteserre that you had carried out his instructions, I don't see how you are going to explain why it was that Gothard kept on bringing you plaster. You must have passed your house,

and, when you stopped to leave your tools, could have told Gothard that the job was finished."

This unanswerable argument produced an oppressive silence in the audience.

"Come, own up," thundered the prosecutor, "it was not a post that you buried—"

"Then you believe it was the Senator?" asked Michu with an air of deepest irony.

M. de Granville made a formal demand that the court compel the official to explain his meaning. Michu was being tried for abduction and illegal restraint, not for murder. The question was out of place and of too serious a nature to pass unnoticed. By the Code of Brumaire, year IV., the prosecutor was enjoined from introducing any extraneous matter into the proceedings. He must adhere strictly to the terms of the indictment, otherwise the defence might move for a dismissal.

The public prosecutor replied that Michu, the principal actor in the crime, who in the interest of his masters had assumed all the responsibility of it, might have been engaged in walling up the entrance to the place, as yet unknown, in which the Senator was languishing.

Badgered with questions and forced to contradict himself in presence of Gothard, Michu smote with his fist the rail of the dock and said:

"I had nothing whatever to do with the abduction of the Senator; it is my belief that his enemies, for purposes best known to themselves, are holding him in confinement; but when he comes to light again, if he ever does, you will see that the plaster could not have figured in the case."

"Good!" said the lawyer, addressing the prosecutor, "you have done more to help my client than I could have accomplished by anything I might say."

The first day's session of the court terminated with this audacious assertion, which produced a deep impression on the jury and gave a decided advantage to the defence. Bordin and the members of the local bar were enthusiastic

in congratulating the young advocate. The public prosecutor, not a little worried by his opponent's concluding words, began to fear that he was the victim of some deep-laid plot, and he had in fact allowed himself to be taken in a trap adroitly set for him by the defence, and in which Gothard had admirably played his part. The would-be wits of the city said that the affair had been replastered, that the public prosecutor had spread it on too thick, that the Simeuses were made white as plaster, etc. In France everything is food for pleasantry, nothing is too trivial or too solemn to be the subject of a jest. Men joke on the scaffold, at the Beresina, on the barricades, and doubtless some incorrigible Frenchman will be heard perpetrating puns at the great assizes of the last judgment.

On the following day the witnesses for the prosecution were heard: Mme. Marion, Mme. Grévin, Grévin, the Senator's valet, Violette, the tenor of whose depositions those who have read the preceding narrative of events will readily conceive. All identified the five defendants, with more or less hesitation in the case of the four gentlemen, with absolute certainty as to Michu. Beauvisage repeated the chance remark let fall by Robert d'Hauteserre at his farm. The peasant who had visited the chateau to bargain for the calf told of the words he had heard Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne utter. The experts, on being called to the stand, confirmed their testimony as to the comparison made by them between the imprints left in the park and those made by the shoes taken from the horses of the four gentlemen, which, as stated in the indictment, were absolutely identical. This detail, as was to be expected, gave rise to an acrimonious dispute between M. de Granville and the public prosecutor. The defence called up the Cinq-Cygne blacksmith, and through him showed that similar shoes had been sold a few days previously to persons who were strangers in the neighborhood. The smith further declared that he was in the habit of shoeing in that particular manner not only the horses from the Cinq-Cygne stables, but many others in the canton.



Finally, the horse that Michu generally rode, for a wonder, had been last shod in Troyes, and the impressions of that set of shoes were not recognized among the others found in the park.

"Michu's Sosia was not aware of that circumstance," said M. de Granville, looking at the jury, "and the prosecution has not shown that we used one of the horses from the stables of the chateau."

He was merciless in his denunciation of Violette's testimony in relation to the resemblance of the horses, seen by him from a distance and from behind. Notwithstanding the strenuous efforts of his counsel, the great mass of direct evidence threatened to overwhelm Michu. Prosecution, audience, court and jury all felt, as the defence had felt before them, that the guilt of the servant involved that of the masters. Bordin had seen where lay the crux of the case when he assigned M. de Granville to defend Michu, but the defence thereby disclosed its secrets. Every smallest detail concerning the former foreman of Gondreville assumed a palpitating interest. Michu, moreover, bore himself magnificently. During the daily sessions of the court he displayed all the intelligence and readiness that nature had gifted him with; the public recognized his superiority, but, strange to relate, it believed all the more firmly on that account that he was the author of the crime. The witnesses for the defence, of less importance in the eyes of the jury and the law than the witnesses for the prosecution, appeared to testify from a sense of duty, and were listened to in the same perfunctory manner. In the first place, neither Marthe nor M. and Mme. d'Hauteserre were sworn, and Catherine and the Durieus, in their capacity as household servants, were in a similar position. M. d'Hauteserre affirmed that it was true that he had instructed Michu to replace the overturned post. The report of the experts, read in this connection, confirmed the old gentleman's statement, but they also gave a measure of comfort to the directeur du jury by declaring that it was impossible for them to determine when

the work was done; whether twenty days or twenty weeks had since elapsed they could not attempt to say. The appearance of Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne excited the liveliest interest, but at sight of her cousins on the prisoners' bench after having been parted from them for more than three weeks, she was so overcome by her emotions that she had almost an air of guilt. She was conscious of an irresistible longing to go and sit beside the twins, and, as she afterward confessed, was forced to exert all her strength of will to repress a furious blind impulse that urged her to kill the public prosecutor, that she might take her stand beside them before all the world, a criminal. She told her story in a straightforward manner, entirely free from affectation, how, returning to Cinq-Cygne and seeing smoke rising in the park, she had supposed there was a fire. For some time she had thought that the smoke was caused by the gardeners burning weeds and brush.

"However," she added, "I subsequently remembered a circumstance to which I desire to call the attention of the court. I found among the brandebourgs of my riding-habit and the folds of my collar small fragments of charred paper that seemed to have been lodged there by the wind."

"Was there much smoke?" asked Bordin.

"Yes," replied Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne. "I thought a house was burning."

"This is important; it may change the entire aspect of the case," said Bordin. "I request the court to order an immediate search of the locality where the fire occurred."

The president made the required order.

Grévin, recalled at the request of the defence and examined in relation to the circumstance, asserted his entire ignorance of the matter. But there was an exchange of looks between Bordin and Grévin that served to their mutual enlightenment.

"The entire case lies there!" the old attorney said to himself.

"They are getting at it!" thought the notary.

But the wary old birds knew, one as well as the other, that the search ordered by the court would be without results. Bordin told himself that Grévin would be impenetrable as a stone-wall, and Grévin congratulated himself on his forethought in obliterating all traces of the fire. The point was of only secondary interest in the trial, and appears almost puerile, but is really of capital importance in the justification which history owes to those young men. Pigoult and the experts sent to elucidate it by an inspection of the park reported that they had found no place where there were traces of fire. Bordin subpoenaed two laborers, who testified that, in conformity with instructions from the keeper, they had plowed over a portion of the meadow from which the grass had been burned off; but when asked what, in their opinion, had been burned there, as indicated by the ashes, they answered that they had not taken notice. The keeper, recalled at the instance of the defence, swore that as he was walking into Arcis that morning to witness the rejoicings he had passed the door of the chateau, and the Senator had called to him to plow over that piece of meadow, which had attracted his attention while out for his daily exercise.

"What had been burned there—weeds or papers?"

"There was nothing, so far as I could see, to indicate that papers had been burned," replied the keeper.

"Well," urged the defendants' counsel, "if it was weeds that were burned, there must have been some one to bring them to the spot and set fire to them."

The depositions of the curé and Mlle. Goujet produced a favorable impression. As they came out from vespers and were walking in the direction of the forest, they had seen the gentlemen and Michu emerge from the chateau on horseback and ride off toward the wood. Abbé Goujet's position in the community and his reputation as an honest man gave great weight to his words.

The summing up of the public prosecutor, who was confident of obtaining a conviction, was of the usual stereo-



typed sort. The accused were incorrigible enemies of France, her institutions and her laws. Disorder was their element. Although they had held commissions in the army of Condé, and had been implicated in every attempt against the life of the Emperor, that generous monarch had pardoned them, had caused their names to be erased from the list of émigrés. And this was the return that he received for his clemency! His address, in short, was a *rifacimento* of the oratorical flights which were then employed in the service of the Bourbons against the Bonapartists, which at the present day are furbished up anew and made to do duty against the legitimists and Republicans in the name of the younger branch. Those platitudes, which might have some meaning if employed by an established government, will appear, to put it mildly, comical, when history shall record their unvarying similitude, at all times and on all occasions, in the mouth of the public ministry. The *mot*, "The sign is changed, but the wine is still the same!" which had its origin in troubles of a more ancient date, is as true now as it was then. The public prosecutor, who became one of the most eminent procureurs généraux of the Empire, attributed the crime to the fixed determination of the returned émigrés to protest by every means within their power against the occupation of their estates. He did not neglect so fair an opportunity to harrow up his hearers' souls with a blood-curdling account of the Senator's position, then marshalled his battalions of facts, surmises and suppositions with an address stimulated by the prospective recompense of his zeal, and calmly resumed his seat to await the bombardment of the defence.

This was the only criminal cause in which M. de Granville ever appeared, but it won for him fame and reputation. First of all, he brought to his plea that persuasive eloquence which carries all before it, and which we admire to-day in Berryer; next, he was convinced of his clients' innocence, and a man with a conviction finds it easy to convince others. Here are the principal points of his address, which

was reported in full by the newspapers of the time. He began with a vindication of Michu's life, placing it before his audience in its true light. It was a pathetic narrative, replete with the noblest sentiments, which enlisted the sympathies of all. Hearing that eloquent voice raised in his rehabilitation, there was a moment when tears welled from Michu's yellow eyes and rolled down his rugged unprepossessing face. He appeared at that instant what he actually was—a man with the simplicity and cunning of a child, a man whose entire life had known but a single thought. The man's true inwardness was suddenly explained, more than by aught else by his tears, which produced a great effect upon the jury. The shrewd lawyer availed himself of this sympathetic impulse to begin his analysis of the charges.

"Where is the *corpus delicti*? Where is the Senator?" he asked. "You accuse us of having removed him from the haunts of men, of having shut him up behind bolts and bars, behind walls of stone and plaster! But, granting that we alone know where he is, and as you have kept us in prison for the last three weeks and more, he must be dead by this for lack of food and drink. We are murderers, and yet you do not charge us with murder. But, if he is living, we must have accomplices. Do you suppose that if we had accomplices and the Senator were alive we would not produce him? Why, when the designs which you impute to us have proved a failure, should we do something to uselessly aggravate our position? We might, by our repentance, secure a pardon for an attempt that proved abortive; and still we persist in our detention of a man from whom nothing is to be gained! Is not that, on the face of it, absurd?—Take back your plaster to whence you got it; it has proved a wretched failure," said he, turning to the public prosecutor; "for we are either idiotic criminals, which you do not believe, or innocent men, victims of circumstances alike inexplicable to us and you. You would do better to look for the mass of papers burned in the Senator's garden; a dis-

covery there would reveal interests far more urgent than those mentioned by you, and would account for his disappearance."

He discussed these hypotheses with wondrous ability. He had much to say of the moral character of the witnesses for the defence, whose religious faith was deep, who believed in a future and in eternal punishment. His treatment of these subjects was sublime, and he moved his audience profoundly.

"Just think of it!" said he, "those guilty individuals are dining in all peace and security when they are apprised by their cousin of the abduction of the Senator. When the officer of gendarmerie suggests a way of terminating the affair, they refuse to surrender the Senator; they have not the remotest idea what it is all about!"

Then with a few rapid strokes he dashed in the outlines of a mysterious affair, the key to which was in the hands of Time, who would some day strip the veils from that unjust accusation and show it in all its ugly nakedness. And, following up this train of thought, the bold and ingenious idea occurred to him of substituting himself in imagination for a member of the jury. He related his deliberations with his colleagues; he pictured himself as so unhappy if, having been instrumental in inflicting cruel punishment upon a fellow-creature, it should afterward be discovered that there had been an error; he depicted his remorse in such vivid colors and recalled in such forceful language the doubts that the counsel's plea had inspired in him, that he left the jury overwhelmed by a sense of their responsibilities, in a condition of inexpressible anxiety.

Jurors had not as yet been surfeited with harangues of this description, they still had the charm of novelty, and the jury was manifestly shaken in its convictions. After M. de Granville's red-hot plea, the jurymen had to listen to the specious and acute attorney, who multiplied considerations, brought out all the obscure and intricate points of the case, and made what was simply obscure inexplica-



ble. He went about his work in a manner to impress the reason and intelligence of his hearers, as M. de Granville had attacked their heart and imagination. In a word, he managed to so befog the jury with such intensity of conviction that the public prosecutor saw the framework of his edifice crumbling. This was so evident that counsel for the d'Hauteserres and Gothard, seeing that the case was virtually abandoned so far as they were concerned, resolved to leave their clients' fate in the hands of the jury. The prosecutor asked for an adjournment until the following day for his argument in rejoinder. All in vain did Bordin, who saw acquittal written in the jury's eyes if it went out to deliberate with those two pleas still ringing in its ears, protest, alleging grounds of law and fact, against his clients being compelled to undergo the torture of another night of suspense; the court took the prosecutor's motion under advisement.

"It seems to us," said the president, announcing the result of their conference, "that this is a matter in which society is interested no less than the accused. The court would show itself wanting in every notion of equity if it should deny a similar request emanating from the defence; it must therefore accord it to the prosecution."

"Ill luck is good luck's next-door neighbor," said Bordin, looking at his clients. "As good as acquitted to-day, you may be convicted to-morrow."

"Whatever the event," said the elder Simeuse, "we can only thank and admire you."

Tears were in Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne's eyes. After the scanty hopes extended to her by the lawyers, she had deemed so great a measure of success impossible. Everybody came up to congratulate her and assure her that her cousins' acquittal was a certainty. But the end was not yet; there was to be a final transformation scene, more startling, more sinister, more unforeseen than any that ever changed the aspect of a criminal trial!

On the day after M. de Granville's summing up, at five

o'clock in the morning, the Senator was discovered travelling in the direction of Troyes along the public highway. He had been relieved of his irons while he slept by unknown liberators; he knew nothing of the trial or the celebrity that his name had suddenly acquired throughout all Europe; his only thought was one of thankfulness that he was permitted once more to breathe the air of heaven. The man who had been the pivot on which this drama turned was no less amazed by what he heard than were his discoverers at seeing him. A farmer's cart was provided for his accommodation, and he soon found himself at the prefecture in Troyes. The prefect immediately notified the directeur du jury, the government commissary and the public prosecutor, who, upon hearing the account given by the Comte de Gondreville, despatched officers to take Marthe from her bed at the Durieus', while the directeur du jury filled up and signed a warrant for her arrest. Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne, too, who was out on bail, was aroused from one of the few brief slumbers that she had managed to obtain in the midst of her unceasing anxieties, and was held at the prefecture for subsequent examination. Orders were sent to the warden of the jail to allow no communication with the prisoners; not even their counsel were to be admitted to them. At ten o'clock the multitude that thronged the street learned that the session of the court was postponed until one in the afternoon.

This changed condition of affairs, coincident with the news of the Senator's deliverance, the arrest of Marthe and Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne, and the orders further restricting the liberty of the prisoners, brought terror and dismay to the Hotel de Chargebœuf. The entire city and the strangers assembled within its gates to witness the trial, the newspaper reporters, and even the common people were in a state of ferment that may be readily imagined. About ten o'clock Abbé Goujet dropped in to exchange views with M. and Mme. d'Hauteserre and the lawyers. Breakfast was served, and they all fell to with such appetite as they

could command under the circumstances. The curé led Bordin and M. de Granville apart; he disclosed to them what Marthe had told him in confidence and laid before them the fragment of the letter that she had received. A swift glance passed between the two lawyers, after which Bordin said to the curé:

"Not another word! there seems to be no hope for us. We will at least put a bold face on the matter."

Marthe proved unequal to resisting the joint attack of the directeur du jury and the public prosecutor. At the instigation of the Senator, Lechesneau had sent for and obtained the bottom crust of the last loaf brought by Marthe, which he had left in the vault together with the empty bottles and various other things. During the long hours of his captivity Malin had amused himself by framing conjectures as to his situation and watching for any small indications that might some day assist to put him on the track of his enemies. He naturally communicated the result of his observations to the magistrate. Michu's house, being of recent construction, would be likely to have a new oven. As the joints of the tiles and bricks on which the bread was placed to bake formed a sort of geometrical pattern it would be possible, by taking an impression of the oven-floor, the pattern of which was reproduced on the bottom of the loaf, to obtain conclusive proof of the bread having been baked there. Then, too, the bottles, sealed with green wax, would doubtless be found to be the counterparts of those in Michu's cellar.

These shrewd remarks, repeated to the juge de paix, who was sent to make the perquisitions in Marthe's presence, produced the results that the Senator had foreseen. Frightened and bewildered by these self-evident proofs, deceived by the apparent candor and friendliness with which Lechesneau, the government commissary and the public prosecutor urged her to make full confession as the only means of saving her husband's life, Marthe owned up that the Senator's place of detention had been known only to



Michu and the MM. de Simeuse and d'Hauteserre, and that on three occasions, each time by night, she had carried provisions to the prisoner. Laurence, questioned as to what she knew of the hiding-place in the wood, was forced to admit that Michu had discovered it and long since called her attention to it as affording a suitable shelter for the gentlemen from the pursuit of the police.

As soon as these interrogatories were completed, the jury and the lawyers were advised of the resumption of the hearing. At three o'clock the president called the court to order and announced the discovery of further evidence. He directed an attendant to place before Michu three wine-bottles and asked him if he recognized them as his, at the same time calling his attention to the similarity of the wax on two bottles that were empty and that on the third bottle, which was full and had been taken that morning, in his wife's presence, by the juge de paix from the cellar of the farmhouse. Michu refused to identify them as his property, but the importance of the new exhibits was appreciated by the jury, to whom the president explained that the empty bottles had been found in the Senator's place of confinement. Each of the defendants was questioned as to the vault situated under the ruins of the old monastery. It was finally ascertained, as the result of a re-examination of all the witnesses for the prosecution and the defence, that the existence of the subterranean retreat, originally discovered by Michu, was known only to him, Laurence, and the four gentlemen. The sensation produced among the audience and in the jury box may be imagined when the public prosecutor announced that this vault, the existence of which was known only to the accused and two of the witnesses, had served as the Senator's prison-house. Marthe was called to the stand. Her appearance caused a stir among the audience and gave rise to deep anxiety among the defendants. M. de Granville interposed an objection to a wife testifying against her husband. The public prosecutor rejoined that, by her own confession, Marthe was an accomplice in the crime: she was

not to be sworn, she was simply to be heard as an additional means of getting at the truth.

"Besides, all we have to do," said the president, "is to lay before the jury the results of her examination before the *directeur du jury*," and he directed the clerk to read the minutes of the inquiry held that morning.

"Do you acknowledge this to be your testimony?" asked the president.

Michu looked at his wife, and Marthe, who saw her mistake, fell in a dead faint. A thunderbolt, it is safe to say, could not have produced more consternation if it had crashed down on the heads of the defendants and their counsel.

"I never wrote to my wife while I was in prison, and I know none of the employés there," said Michu.

Bordin handed him the fragments of the letter. Michu had only to give them a passing glance.

"It is a forgery," he cried; "some one has counterfeited my writing."

"A denial was to be expected, it is your last resource," said the public prosecutor.

The Senator was then introduced with the ceremonies prescribed for his reception. His entrance was theatrical. Malin, addressed by the magistrates as Comte de Gondreville, exhibited no sign of pity for the former owners of that noble residence. At the request of the president he looked on the accused, scrutinizing them long and attentively. He declared that the apparel of the kidnappers corresponded exactly with that of the gentlemen, but added that the disturbance of his faculties at the moment of his abduction was such that he could not undertake to swear that the accused were the guilty parties.

"And more," he continued, "it is my conviction that those four gentlemen had nothing to do with the affair. The hands that bandaged my eyes were big and rough, the hands of laboring men. For that reason," said Malin, looking at Michu, "I should be more inclined to think that it was my former foreman who charged himself with that

polite attention, but I beg the gentlemen of the jury to consider carefully my deposition. My suspicions in that direction are of the slightest, and I cannot speak with any degree of certainty. For this reason: The two men who seized me placed me on a horse behind the individual who had bandaged my eyes and whose hair was red, of the same shade as that of the defendant Michu. Strange as what I am about to say may appear, I am compelled to say it, for it forms the substance of a conviction favorable to the accused, who will not, I trust, feel hurt by my remark. Bound as I was to the back of an unknown man I could not help, notwithstanding the speed at which we rode, being affected by his odor. Now, what I wish to say is, I did not recognize in it the odor distinctive of Michu. As for the person who, on three occasions, brought me food and drink, I am absolutely certain that that person was no other than Michu's wife Marthe. I recognized her on the occasion of her first visit by a ring that Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne gave her and which she neglected to remove. The court and the jury will make allowance for the discrepancies which they will observe in these statements, for which I am as yet unable to account."

When Malin resumed his seat after giving his testimony he was greeted with a subdued murmur of applause and general approbation. Bordin asked permission of the court to put a few questions to the distinguished witness.

"Does M. le Sénateur believe that his confinement was due to interests other than those attributed to the accused by the prosecution?"

"Certainly!" replied the Senator. "But as to those motives I am entirely in the dark; for, as I told you, during the twenty days of my captivity I saw no living soul."

"Do you believe," asked the public prosecutor, "that your chateau of Gondreville could have contained papers—title-deeds, for instance, or legal documents—of sufficient interest to the MM. de Simeuse to induce them to pay you a domiciliary visit?"



"I do not think so," returned Malin. "I consider the gentlemen incapable, if such were the case, of using violent methods to possess themselves of them. And they could have them at any time simply by asking me for them."

"Did not M. le Sénateur have a lot of papers burned in his park?" M. de Granville suddenly asked.

The Senator looked at Grévin. The two men exchanged a swift, sly glance which, however, was intercepted by Bordin, after which Malin made answer that he had burned no papers. The public prosecutor having asked for more particulars as to the ambush of which he had nearly been the victim in his park, and if he might not be mistaken as to the direction in which the gun was pointed, the Senator replied that Michu was keeping a lookout from his position up in a tree. This answer, agreeing as it did with Grévin's testimony, produced a deep impression. The gentlemen preserved their attitude of impassibility during the deposition of their enemy, who quite overwhelmed them with his generosity. Laurence suffered the most frightful agony. Momently the Marquis de Chargebœuf had to pluck her by the sleeve to remind her where she was. The Comte de Gondreville as he withdrew bowed to the four gentlemen, who ignored his salutation. This trivial circumstance aroused the ire of the jury.

"They are lost!" said Bordin in the Marquis's ear.

"Yes, alas! by their confounded pride, as usual," rejoined M. de Chargebœuf.

"Our task is made too easy for us, gentlemen," said the public prosecutor, rising and facing the jury.

He explained that the two bags of plaster had been employed in the arrangements necessary to the safe keeping of the prisoner, which, as set forth by Pigoult in his report, consisted of a stout wooden bar playing in sockets on either side of the door and fastened with a padlock. It was to secure those iron sockets in the stonework that the plaster had been needed. He had no difficulty in demonstrating that, save to the accused, the existence of the cave was

unknown to every one. He exposed the falsehoods and evasions of the defence, and pulverized all their contentions with the trip-hammer blows of the evidence that had come to hand so unexpectedly. In 1806 we were still too short a way removed from the "Supreme Being" of 1793 to speak of divine justice. The jury was spared the customary platitudes about a "miraculous intervention of Providence." In conclusion, he said that justice would keep an eye on the unknown accomplices who had delivered the Senator, and, resuming his seat, awaited with confidence the verdict.

The jury believed there was a mystery, but its members were all convinced that that mystery lay at the door of the accused, who held their tongues from motives of private interest of the highest importance.

M. de Granville, more than ever convinced that some underhand influence was at work against his clients, got on his feet again; but he appeared disheartened, not so much by the new evidence, however, as by the manifest conviction of the jury. His effort surpassed, if anything, that of the previous day. This second argument was certainly more logical, more closely reasoned than the former. But he felt that his warmth was wasted on the coldness of the jury. He was talking to no purpose, and he saw it—a most horrible, soul-freezing situation! He alluded to the deliverance of the Senator, brought about as if by magic, certainly without the co-operation of Marthe or any of the accused, and bade the jury consider how it corroborated his previous statements. Assuredly, the accused might yesterday have looked for an acquittal, and if, as the prosecution had intimated, it rested with them whether to hold or free the Senator, they would not have delivered him until after the trial. He endeavored to impress on them that the deed could have been done only by lurking enemies, working under cover of the darkness.

It will appear strange, but M. de Granville succeeded in raising doubts only in the minds of the public prosecutor and the magistrates, for the jury listened to him merely

from a sense of duty. Even the audience, usually so kindly disposed toward persons under accusation, was convinced of the defendants' guilt. There is an atmosphere of ideas. In a court of justice the ideas of the multitude exert an influence on the judges and the jury, and reciprocally. Observing this mental state, which is capable of making itself known or felt, the young advocate attained in his concluding words a sort of feverish energy due to the strength of his conviction.

"Speaking in the name of the accused, I forgive you in advance for a fatal error of which the consequences can never be dispelled!" he cried. "We are all the sport of an unknown and Machiavelian power. Marthe Michu is the victim of an odious perfidy, and society will see it when the wrong is done and is irreparable."

Bordin relied principally on the Senator's deposition in asking for the acquittal of the gentlemen.

The president's charge to the jury was characterized by all the more impartiality that they had evidently made up their minds. He even tipped the scales a little in favor of the accused by the prominence that he gave to Malin's deposition. This condescension did not endanger the success of the prosecution. At eleven o'clock that night the court, in accordance with the several findings of the jury as voiced by its representative, the foreman, passed sentence: Michu to death, the two Simeuses to twenty-four and the two d'Hauteserres to ten years' imprisonment with hard labor; Gothard was acquitted. Every one in the court room remained to observe the attitude of the five defendants when, relieved of their gyves, they should be brought before the court to hear their sentence. The four gentlemen looked at Laurence, who, dry-eyed, cast back at them the martyr's blazing look.

"You would have seen her weep if we had been acquitted!" said the younger of the Simeuses to his brother.

Never did men wrongfully convicted listen to their sen-



tence with serener face and more perfect composure than did those five victims of a horrible conspiracy.

"Our counsel has forgiven you!" said the elder Simeuse, addressing the court.

Mme. d'Hautesserre was taken seriously ill and remained for three months an inmate of the Hotel de Chargeboeuf, unable to leave her bed. The old father returned quietly to Cinq-Cygne; but with one of those old man's sorrows which have no youthful distractions to relieve them continually preying on him, he had frequent fits of absent-mindedness, which proved to the curé that the tones of that fatal sentence were ever ringing in his ears. The State was not put to the expense of trying Marthe; she died in prison twenty days after her husband was sentenced, commending her son to Laurence, in whose arms she breathed her last. The result once known, political events of the deepest interest effaced the memory of the great trial, and it ceased to be a subject of conversation among men. It is with society as with the sea: it resumes its level, its equable movements, after the storm has passed, and quickly obliterates the last trace of it in the hurry and bustle of its devouring interests.

Had it not been for her strength of mind and the conviction of her cousins' innocence, Laurence must have succumbed; but she gave fresh proofs of the grandeur of her character, and surprised Bordin and M. de Granville by the apparent serenity with which noble natures meet adversity. She nursed and tended Mme. d'Hautesserre, and devoted two hours every day to visiting the prisoners. She declared that she would marry one of her cousins when they were sent away to the galleys.

"To the galleys!" exclaimed Bordin. "But we must not think of the galleys, Mademoiselle; all we must think of is how we may secure a pardon for them from the Emperor."

"A pardon for them, from a Bonaparte!" she cried in a tone of horror and aversion.

The staid old attorney's spectacles dropped off his nose;

he caught them as they fell and gave a look at that young person who somehow was beginning to look like a woman, and suddenly the depths of her nature were revealed to him. Taking the Marquis de Chargebœuf by the arm, he said—

“Monsieur le Marquis, we will run up to Paris and save them without her help!”

The cases on appeal of Michu and the four gentlemen stood at the head of the docket of the Cour de Cassation. Decision was fortunately delayed by the ceremonies attending the installation of the court.

Toward the end of the month of September, after three hearings, at which Merlin, the procureur-général, argued the case in person on behalf of the State, the appeal was denied. The Cour Impériale at Paris was by that time in working order, and M. de Granville had been appointed substitute to its procureur-général. As the department of the Aube lay within the jurisdiction of that court, he found it possible to occasionally slip a word into the ear of his superiors in behalf of the condemned. He tried the patience of his protector Cambacérès. On the morning after the decision Bordin and M. de Chargebœuf called at his house in the Marais, where they found him in the midst of the honeymoon, for he had taken a wife to himself since the trial. Notwithstanding the many and important events that had been crowded into his former lawyer's existence, M. de Chargebœuf plainly saw, by the young substitute's sorrowful air, that he had remained faithful to his clients. Certain lawyers, the great artists of the profession, have a way of making their cases their mistresses. But this is not a thing that happens every day; you would best not pin your faith to it. As soon as he and his former clients were alone together in his study, he said to the Marquis:

“I did not wait for you to come and see me; I have even exhausted all my credit. You must not attempt to save Michu; by doing so you would only impair the chances of saving the others. There will have to be a victim.”

“Mon Dieu!” said Bordin, taking out and showing to

the young magistrate the three applications for pardon, "can I take it on me to suppress the petition of your old client? To throw this paper into the fire is the same thing as cutting off his head."

He presented Michu's power of attorney; M. de Granville took it and looked it over.

"We cannot suppress it, but mind what I say! If you ask for all, you will get nothing."

"Have we time to consult with Michu?" asked Bordin.

"Yes. The warrant for the execution issues from the procureur-général's office, and we can give you a few days. We kill men," he added, with some bitterness, "but we do it according to rule, especially here at Paris."

Information already had by M. de Chargebœuf from other quarters gave added weight to M. de Granville's uncheerful words.

"Michu is an innocent man; I know it and I delcare it," the magistrate continued; "but what can one man do against all? Remember that my role to-day is to hold my peace. I must help to build the scaffold on which my old client will lose his head."

M. de Chargebœuf was well enough acquainted with Laurence to know that she would never consent to see her cousins' lives saved at the expense of Michu's. The Marquis accordingly resolved to see what could be done in another direction. He sought an audience of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, to ascertain if in the exalted regions of diplomacy there were greater chance of safety. He took with him Bordin, who knew the minister and had been of service to him. The two old men found Talleyrand gazing intently into his fire, his feet extended to the blaze, his elbow resting on the table and his head upon his hand, the morning paper on the floor beside him. He had just finished reading the decision of the Cour de Cassation.

"Be seated, Monsieur le Marquis," said the minister.— "And you, Bordin," he added, indicating a place opposite him at the table, "sit there and write—



"SIRE—Four innocent gentlemen, brought in guilty by the jury, have just heard that their sentence has been confirmed by your court of last appeal.

"Your Imperial Majesty alone can save their lives. These gentlemen implore this grace of your august clemency solely that they may have opportunity to utilize their lives by fighting in defence of their country beneath your Majesty's eyes, and subscribe themselves your Imperial and Royal Majesty's most dutiful and humble—" etc.

"Only princes have it in their power to confer such favors," said the Marquis de Chargebœuf, taking from Bordin's hands the precious draught of the petition that was to receive the signatures of the four gentlemen, and promising himself that many an august name besides should be added to it.

"The life of your relatives, Monsieur le Marquis," returned the Minister, "rests with the god of battles. Try to come up with his Majesty the day after a victory; they will be saved!"

He took the pen and with his own hand wrote a confidential letter to the Emperor, and another, ten lines in length, to Marshal Duroc, then touched the bell, bade his secretary bring him a diplomatic passport, and, turning to the attorney, asked unconcernedly—

"What is your opinion of that case?"

"Do you not know, Monseigneur, who it was that tangled us all up in such a snarl?"

"Perhaps I do, but I have reasons for wishing to be more certainly informed. Return to Troyes and bring back Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne with you; have her here to-morrow at this hour, but observe the utmost secrecy; let the servants show her into Mme. de Talleyrand's apartments, whom I will notify of your visit. If Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne, who will be stationed in a place whence she can obtain a distinct view of the man who will be with me, recognizes in him the person who paid her a visit at the time of the conspiracy of

MM. de Rivière and de Polignac, then, whatever I may say, whatever he may answer, remember, not a word! Not a gesture! And think only of saving the MM. de Simeuse and d'Hauteserre; cut loose from that rascally gamekeeper of yours; let him take care of himself."

"One of Nature's noblemen, Monseigneur!" cried Bordin.

"What, enthusiasm! And in you, Bordin! I begin to think there must be something in the man.—Our sovereign is grown prodigiously vain of late, Monsieur le Marquis," said he, abruptly changing the subject of conversation. "He will be for dismissing me presently, I suppose, that he may indulge his whims uncontradicted. He is a great soldier, who makes the laws of time and space bow to his will, but he cannot transform men, and he would like to make them over to suit his purposes. Now don't forget that your relatives' pardon can be obtained only by one person—by Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne."

The Marquis set out alone for Troyes, and informed Laurence how matters stood. She obtained from the procureur impérial permission to see Michu; the Marquis accompanied her to the prison door and there awaited her return. When she came out her eyes were wet with tears.

"The poor man," said she, "forgot the fetters on his feet, and would have knelt to me to beg me think of him no more! Ah! Marquis, I will plead his cause—yes, I will go and kiss the toe of their Emperor's boot. And, if I fail, I will see to it that that man's memory lives forever in our family. I want his portrait. Present his application for pardon to gain time.—We will go."

When on the following day the minister learned by a prearranged signal that Laurence was at her post he rang his bell, the attendant appeared, and was directed to admit M. Corentin.

"My dear sir, you are a man of address," said Talleyrand, "and I wish to employ you."

"Monseigneur—"

"Listen. You may make money by working for Fouché,

but will never have respect or a recognized position, while by serving me with the adroitness and diligence that you lately exhibited at Berlin, consideration will be yours."

"Monseigneur is very kind—"

"You showed real genius in that last affair of yours at Gondreville."

"Of what does Monseigneur speak?" asked Corentin with an artfully calculated air, in which there was neither excessive indifference nor inordinate surprise.

"Monsieur," the minister curtly replied, "you will never amount to anything, you are afraid—"

"Afraid! Of what, Monseigneur?"

"Of death!" the Minister rejoined in his mellow, deep, impressive voice. "Adieu, my friend."

"It is he," exclaimed the Marquis de Chargebœuf, bursting into the room; "but we have almost killed the Comtesse; she is suffocating!"

"It takes him to play such tricks," replied the Minister. "Monsieur, you have great difficulties before you; I fear for your success," the Prince continued. "Give out that you are going by way of Strasburg; I will see that you are furnished with duplicate passports in blank. Provide yourselves with Sosias, change your direction now and then, and, in particular, be sure to change your carriage; let the authorities stop your Sosias at Strasburg in your place, make your way into Prussia through Switzerland and Bavaria. Be wary, be prudent, speak to nobody, answer no questions. You have the police against you, and you don't know what the police is!"

Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne offered to Robert Lefebvre a sum sufficient to induce him to come to Troyes and paint Michu's portrait, and M. de Granville promised that the artist, then at the height of his celebrity, should be given every possible facility. M. de Chargebœuf set out with Laurence in his old berlingot, accompanied by a servant who could speak German. At Nancy, however, he came up with Gothard and Mlle. Goujet, who had started before them in an excel-



lent calèche; he made an exchange with them, taking the calèche and leaving them the berlingot. The event proved the correctness of the minister's provisions. At Strasburg the chief of police refused to affix the usual cabalistic scrawl to the travellers' passport, alleging orders from headquarters. At that same moment the Marquis and Laurence, with the diplomatic passport, were crossing the French frontier at Besançon. Laurence crossed Switzerland in the early days of October without vouchsafing scarcely a glance at that picturesque country. She lay stretched on the cushions of the calèche in that lethargic state which comes over the criminal when he knows that his hour of suffering is nigh. All nature is then enveloped in clouds of swirling, boiling vapor, and the most commonplace objects assume fantastic forms. The thought, "I must succeed, else they will kill themselves," kept pounding on her heart as in the past, in the punishment of the wheel, the executioner's iron bar used to descend on the victim's limbs. She felt herself growing continually weaker and more helpless; all her energy seemed to be leaving her as the moment approached—the cruel, swift, decisive moment, when she should be brought face to face with the man who was master of the fate of the four gentlemen. In order to husband her energy as far as possible, she had resolved that she would make no effort to throw off her stupor. Incapable of comprehending this forethought of strong minds, which is wont to manifest itself externally in many different ways—for in those moments of supreme suspense certain superior intellects have been known to abandon themselves to a surprising gayety—the Marquis feared that he should not bring Laurence living to that meeting which, solemn for them alone, certainly surpassed the ordinary proportions of private life. For Laurence, to humiliate herself before that man, the object of her hate and scorn, was equivalent to slaying with her own hand all her generous sentiments.

"After that," said she, "the Laurence who survives will be little like her who is about to perish."

It was difficult, however, for the two travellers to remain long unconscious of the immense activity that prevailed among men and things once they were on Prussian ground. The campaign of Jena had begun. Laurence and the Marquis saw the magnificent divisions of the French army stretching away in the distance, manœuvring and parading as if they were in the gardens of the Tuileries. Amid all that display of military splendor, adequately to depict which would require the fervid phrase and imagery of the Scriptures, the man who moved those masses with his spirit assumed gigantic proportions in Laurence's imagination. Presently cheers for a victory resounded in her ears; the Imperial armies had carried off the honors of the day in two partial engagements. The Prince of Prussia had been killed the day before the two travellers arrived at Saalfeld, endeavoring to come up with Napoleon, who moved with lightning-like rapidity. Finally, on the 13th of October, date of evil augury, Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne found herself following the course of a small river, in the midst of the corps of the Grand Army. Around them confusion reigned; they were sent from one village to another and from division to division. She was terrified to be there alone with an old man, tossing on an ocean of a hundred and fifty thousand men faced by another army of equal numbers across the stream. Wearied with looking constantly at the turbid river across the interminable hedgerows that lined the miry road which they were following along a ridge, she called to a soldier and asked its name.

"It is the Saale," he replied, and pointed out to her the corps of the Prussian army massed on the further bank.

Night was coming down. Laurence saw the camp-fires lighted one by one, their ruddy blaze reflected from the long lines of bayonets. The old Marquis, chivalrous in his intrepidity, sat on the box beside his new servant and drove a pair of fresh horses that he had bought the day before. The old man knew that there would not be much chance of obtaining horses or postilions on a battle-

field. The audacious calèche, that had everywhere excited the curiosity and amazement of the soldiery, was brought to a sudden halt by a gendarme of the provost guard of the army, who came careering down slap-dash upon the Marquis and yelled to him:

"Who are you? Where are you going? Whom do you want to see?"

"The Emperor," replied M. de Chargebœuf. "I am the bearer of important despatches from the ministers for Marshal Duroc."

"Well, you can't remain where you are," said the gendarme.

Laurence and the Marquis were obliged to remain where they were, however, more by token that it was by that time quite dark.

"Where are we?" Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne inquired of two officers whom she saw approaching and whose insignia were concealed under their overcoats.

"You are away beyond the advanced posts of the French army, Madame," one of the officers made answer. "It will never do for you to remain here, for if the enemy's troops should attempt a movement and our artillery should open, you would be between two fires."

"Ah!" she carelessly ejaculated.

That "Ah!" elicited a question from the other officer.

"What is that woman doing here?"

"We are awaiting the return of a gendarme," she replied, "who has gone in our behalf to look for M. Duroc, through whose influence we hope to be able to speak with the Emperor."

"Speak with the Emperor!" exclaimed the first officer. "How can you think of such a thing on the eve of a decisive battle?"

"Ah! you are right," said she. "I must postpone my interview until the day after to-morrow. A victory will make him more complaisant."

The two officers moved away a distance of some twenty



paces to the spot where their horses were standing and mounted. A troop of officers, marshals, generals and others, all in brilliant uniforms, thereon surrounded the calèche, which was respected for the simple reason that it was there.

"Mon Dieu!" exclaimed the Marquis for Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne's ear, "I am afraid it was the Emperor that we were talking to!"

"The Emperor?" rejoined a colonel-general; "why, there he stands."

With that Laurence turned her head and saw at a few paces' distance, standing with folded arms, alone, somewhat in advance of a group of officers, the man who had asked, "What is that woman doing here?" One of the two officers—the Emperor, in short—wearing the famous gray greatcoat over a green uniform, was seated on a white horse caparisoned with showy trappings. He raised his field-glass to his eyes and leisurely surveyed the Prussian army beyond the Saale. Laurence then understood why the calèche had been allowed to remain where it was and why the Emperor's escort respected it. She was deeply agitated, she shook convulsively; the hour was come. She heard the dull, deep sound of great bodies of men advancing at double time, hurrying to take up their positions on the plateau. The batteries seemed to have a language of their own: the caissons went bumping over inequalities with a crash and roar, the polished metal flashed and gleamed.

"Marshal Lannes, with his entire corps, will take position in advance; Marshal Lefebvre and the Guard will occupy the heights," shouted the other officer, who was Major-General Berthier.

The Emperor alighted. At the first indication of his intention Roustau, his famous Mameluke, darted forward to hold the stirrup. Laurence, seeing how simply everything was done, was overcome with amazement.

"I shall pass the night here on the plateau," observed the Emperor.

At that moment Marshal Duroc, whom the gendarme had

finally succeeded in finding, came up to the Marquis de Chargebœuf and inquired what was the nature of his business there. The Marquis replied that a personal letter, written by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, would explain what urgent necessity there was that he and Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne should be favored with an immediate audience with the Emperor.

"His Majesty will doubtless dine at his quarters," said Duroc, taking the letter, "and when I have mastered the contents of this communication I will let you know if the matter can be arranged.—Corporal," he added, to the gendarme, "go with this carriage and see it safely to the cabin in rear of the position."

M. de Chargebœuf followed the lead of the gendarme and drew up his calèche behind a miserable hut constructed of wood and earth, surrounded by a few fruit trees, and guarded by detachments of cavalry and infantry.

It may be said with truth that the pomp and circumstance of war were there in all their grandeur. From the plateau the long lines of the hostile armies, traced by their flickering watch-fires, could be seen stretching away until lost in the distance, illuminated by the soft moonlight. After an hour of waiting, filled by the incessant movement of aides-de-camp going and returning, Duroc appeared and, requesting Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne and her companion to alight, ushered them into the hut, the floor of which was of beaten earth, like the threshing-floor of our barns. Napoleon was seated on a common kitchen chair at a table on which were the remnants of his meal, before a fire of green wood that had filled the room with smoke. His boots, plentifully besplashed with mud, told that he had been scouring the country without confining himself to beaten roads. He had thrown off his famous greatcoat, and his green body-coat, crossed by the wide red cordon of his order and contrasting with the immaculate whiteness of his waistcoat and kersey-mere riding-breeches, was in admirable harmony with his pale, stern, Cæsar-like countenance. His hand rested on

a map that he held unfolded on his knee. Behind him, in his showy uniform of Vice-Constable of the Empire, stood Berthier. Constant, the valet de chambre, was handing the Emperor his coffee on a silver salver.

"What do you want?" he asked with affected brusqueness, darting a look at the young woman that seemed to pierce the walls of her skull. "You are not afraid now to speak to me before the battle, eh?—Come, what is it?"

"Sire," she returned, answering his gaze with one fixed as his own, "I am Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne."

"Well?" he replied, and his tone was harsh and angry, as if he fancied that she was braving him.

"Do you not understand? I am the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne, and I come here as a suppliant," said she, falling on her knees and holding up before him the petition drawn by Talleyrand and supplemented by the indorsements of the Empress, Cambacérès and Malin.

The Emperor graciously raised his petitioner, gave her an inquiring look, and said:

"Will you be good now? Do you begin to understand what the French Empire must be?"

"Ah! all I can understand at the present moment is the Emperor," she rejoined, vanquished by the bonhomie with which the Man of Destiny had spoken those words that seemed to give her assurance of success.

"Are they innocent?" asked the Emperor.

"Every one of them!" she earnestly replied.

"No, not all—that gamekeeper is a dangerous man; he might kill my Senator without consulting you on the subject—"

"Oh! sire," she interrupted, "if you had a friend whose devotion was such that he would lay down his life for you, would you forsake him? Would you not—"

"You are a woman," said he, breaking in upon her sentence, with a suspicion of raillery.

"And you are a man of iron!" she retorted with a passionate earnestness that pleased him.



"The man was condemned in accordance with the law of the land," he resumed.

"But he is innocent."

"Child!" said he.

He took Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne by the hand and led her out upon the plateau.

"Here," said he in those persuasive accents which were personal to him, which had the faculty of converting cowards into heroes, "here are three hundred thousand men—they, too, are innocent! Well, to-morrow by this time thirty thousand of them will be dead, will have died for their country! Doubtless, among the Prussians is many a man of genius—inventor, scientist, poet, what not—who is marked for the sickle of the Reaper, and we, on our side, shall lose many whom we would not willingly part with, our great men of the future. It may be my fate to see my best friend perish before my eyes! Shall I rebel, shall I accuse God? No. I will hold my peace. You must remember, Mademoiselle, that it is no less a man's duty to die for the laws of his country than to lay down his life for her here, upon the field of glory," he added, leading her back to the hut. "Now, return to France," said he, looking at the Marquis; "you will there learn what are my wishes in this matter.

Laurence believed that Michu's penalty was to be commuted, and in an effusion of gratitude she bent her knee and kissed the Emperor's hand.

"You are M. de Chargebœuf, I think?" next said Napoleon, eying the Marquis somewhat severely.

"I am, sire."

"Have you children?"

"Lots of them."

"Why not let me have one of your grandsons? He might enter my service as a page—"

"Ah!" thought Laurence, "the sous-lieutenant appears! He wants a *quid pro quo* for favors conferred."

The Marquis bowed and remained silent. At that

moment, fortunately, General Rapp came bustling into the hut.

"Sire, the cavalry of the Guard and that of the Grand-duke of Berg cannot get up before to-morrow noon."

"It doesn't matter," said Napoleon, turning to Berthier. "We, too, have our occasional moments of grace; let us learn to make the most of them."

At a sign from the Emperor the Marquis and Laurence withdrew to their carriage; their friend the corporal guided them to a village, where they passed the night. All the succeeding day they travelled with the thunder of eight hundred pieces of artillery sounding in their ears, and before they came to their resting place for the night tidings had reached them of the tremendous victory of Jena. A week later they were driving through the faubourgs of Troyes. An order of the Chief-Justice, handed down through the procureur of the tribunal of first instance at Troyes, directed the release of the four gentlemen on bail pending the decision of the Emperor and King; but the same mail brought from the Attorney-General's office the order for Michu's execution. The two orders had arrived that very morning. Laurence hurried off immediately to the prison, without stopping to change her travelling dress; the hour was about two of the afternoon. She obtained permission to remain with Michu, over whom they were performing the mournful rite known as *la toilette*. The good Abbé Goujet, who had asked to be allowed to walk with him to the scaffold, had just given absolution to his penitent, who was inconsolable at the thought that he was to die in ignorance of his masters' fate. When Laurence presented herself, therefore, he gave a cry of joy.

"Now I am ready to die!" he said.

"I do not know what are the conditions, but they are pardoned," Laurence informed him; "and I left nothing undone that I could think of in your behalf, my friend, in spite of all they said to me. I thought I had you saved, but the Emperor deceived me with his gracious palaver."

"It was ordained that the watch-dog's blood should be spilled on the same spot as his old masters'," said Michu.

The last hour sped swiftly. When the moment of the supreme parting came, all that Michu dared ask was that he might kiss Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne's hand, but she tendered her cheek and yielded herself to the holy embrace of the noble victim. Michu refused to mount the cart. "The innocent should walk!" he declared.

He would not allow Abbé Goujet to give him the support of his arm; he walked proudly and firmly to the scaffold. As he was about to lie down upon the plank, he asked the executioner to pull down his coat, the collar of which had mounted on his neck.

"My coat is yours by inheritance," said he; "do not let the knife deface it."

The four gentlemen had barely time to greet Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne. An orderly of the general commanding the military division brought them commissions as sous-lieutenants in the same regiment of cavalry, with instructions to join immediately at Bayonne, the depot of their corps. After heart-breaking farewells, for they all had a presentiment of the future, Laurence returned to her lonely chateau.

The Simeuse brothers died together at Sommo-Sierra under the eyes of the Emperor, one defending the other, both already chefs d'escadron. Their last words were—

"Laurence, *cy meurs!*"

The elder d'Hautesperre died a colonel at the assault of the redoubt at la Moskova, where his brother succeeded to his command.

Adrien, commissioned general of brigade at the battle of Dresden, was severely wounded there, and returned to France on sick leave to be nursed back to health at Cinq-Cygne. While straining every nerve to save the life of this sole survivor of the four gentlemen in whose society she had been so happy for a time, the Comtesse, then thirty-two years old, married him; but it was only half a heart that she



had to give him, and he accepted it. Men in love suspect nothing, or suspect everything.

The Restoration left Laurence without enthusiasm, the Bourbons had arrived too late for her; however, she had no reason to complain: her husband, created a peer of France with the title of Marquis de Cinq-Cygne, was promoted lieutenant-general in 1816, and rewarded with the cordon bleu for the eminent services that he rendered in those days.

Michu's son, for whose interests Laurence cared as if he had been her own child, was admitted to the bar in 1827. After two years' exercise of his profession, he was assigned as supplementary judge to the tribunal of Alençon, whence a few years later he removed to Arcis to take the position of procureur du roi. Laurence, who had attended in person to the management of Michu's estate, turned over to the young man on the day he came of age a certificate for twelve thousand livres of rente, and later arranged a match between him and the wealthy Mlle. Girel of Troyes. The Marquis de Cinq-Cygne died in 1829 in Laurence's arms, surrounded by his father, his mother, and his children, by whom he was adored. At the time of his death no one had yet succeeded in unravelling the mystery of the Senator's abduction. Louis XVIII. showed himself not unwilling to do justice by the sufferers by that unfortunate affair, but the Marquise de Cinq-Cygne could never elicit any information from him as to its causes, and she ever after believed that he had something to do with the catastrophe.

## CONCLUSION

THE LATE Marquis de Cinq-Cygne had devoted his savings, as well as those of his father and mother, to the purchase of a magnificent hotel situated in the Rue du Faubourg-du-Roule, and forming part of a considerable majorate created at the time of his elevation to the peerage for the maintenance of his new dignity. This will account for the sordid economy of the Marquis and his relatives,

often a source of shame and sorrow to Laurence. After this acquisition the Marquise, who had been living in the country and putting by something for her children, made a practice of spending her winters in Paris, the more willingly that her son Paul and her daughter Berthe had attained an age when their education required the intellectual resources of the capital. Mme. de Cinq-Cygne did not much frequent society. Her husband could not but be aware of the regrets that dwelt in her heart, but he ever displayed the utmost delicacy and thoughtfulness toward her, and when he died she was the only woman on earth that he had loved. That noble heart, misprized for a time, but to which the generous daughter of the Cinq-Cygnés repaid in later years all the wealth of love that she had received from it, that husband was completely happy in the end. For Laurence all joy of life was in the family. No woman in Paris was more loved than she, or more respected. To have the entrée of her house is counted a distinction. Gentle, indulgent, witty and, best of all, natural, she is in sympathy with nobler and finer natures, she attracts them, despite the marks that sorrow and suffering have left on her countenance; but that woman, by nature so strong and self-reliant, manages to convey to every one the impression that he is a protector, and perhaps it is in the consciousness of that unavowed protection that resides the attraction of her friendship. Her life, so stormy and full of sorrow in its morning, is grown serene and beautiful as its shadows lengthen. Her sufferings are matter of common notoriety. No one ever asks who was the original of the portrait by Robert Lefebvre which, since the keeper's death, has had the place of honor on the wall of her salon. Laurence's face has the maturity of a fruit that has been late in ripening. A sort of religious pride presides to-day over the brow tried by so many troubles. At the moment when the Marquise took possession of her new house her fortune, materially increased by the indemnity laws, produced a yearly income of two hundred thousand livres, without counting her husband's fees

and salary. Laurence had inherited the eleven hundred thousand francs left by the Simeuses. After that she confined her expenditure to a hundred thousand francs a year, and put by the remainder for Berthe's dowry.

Berthe is the living portrait of her mother, but without her Amazonian audacity; she is her mother refined, spiritualized, "more womanish," as Laurence ruefully says. The Marquise preferred that her daughter should not marry until she had reached the age of twenty. The family savings, prudently managed by old d'Hautesserre and invested in the Funds when rentes declined sharply in 1830, constituted a fortune which would yield Berthe, who celebrated her twentieth birthday in 1833, an income of about eighty thousand francs.

In those days the Princesse de Cadignan, who was looking around to secure a wife for her son, the Duc de Maufriageuse, was cultivating friendly relations between that son and the Marquise de Cinq-Cygne. Georges de Maufriageuse dined with the Marquise three times a week; he accompanied the mother and daughter to the Italiens; he pranced about their carriage in the Bois when they went there to take the air. It was quite evident to the world of the Faubourg Saint-Germain that Georges was in love with Berthe. But whether Mme. de Cinq-Cygne was inclined to make a duchess of her daughter against the time when she should be a princess, whether the Princesse desired such a comfortable dowry for her son, whether the celebrated Diane was making up to the provincial nobility, and whether the provincial nobility looked askance at Mme. de Cadignan's celebrity, her expensive tastes and reckless life—these were matters as to which opinions differed and no one could speak with certainty. Desiring not to stand in her son's light, the Princesse, grown suddenly devout, had built a wall around her private life, and was spending the summer months at Geneva, where she owned a villa.

In Mme. la Princesse de Cadignan's salon one evening were the Marquise d'Espard and de Marsay, President of



the Council. She saw her quondam lover for the last time that night, for within the year he died. Rastignac, Under Secretary of State in de Marsay's cabinet, a brace of ambassadors, two celebrated orators of the Upper Chamber, the old Ducs de Lenoncourt and de Navarreins, the Comte de Vandenesse, with his young wife, and d'Arthez were also there, forming a somewhat incongruous assemblage, the composition of which, however, is easily enough explained: it was a matter of obtaining from the Prime Minister a passport for the Prince de Cadignan. De Marsay, who did not care to assume the responsibility, had dropped in to inform the Princesse that the affair was in safe hands. A friend of his, a veteran in politics, would bring them a solution during the evening. The Marquise and Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne were announced. Laurence, who never hauled down her flag, was not surprised, but shocked, to see the most eminent exponents of legitimacy in both Chambers conversing and laughing with and listening to the Prime Minister of him of whom she never spoke save as "Monseigneur le Duc d'Orléans." De Marsay, like a lamp just ready to go out, shone with a fitful brilliancy. He found it pleasant to come there and forget for a while the cares of politics. The Marquise de Cinq-Cygne accepted de Marsay, as the Austrian court in those days is said to have tolerated M. de Saint-Aulaire: they forgot the Minister in the pleasant companion. But when the footman announced M. le Comte de Gondreville she jumped as though she had been sitting on red-hot iron.

"Adieu, Madame," said she to the Princesse in a freezing tone.

She made her exit with Berthe, shaping her course through the rooms in a way to avoid encountering that fatal man.

"I fear you have ruined the chances for Georges' marriage," the Princesse said in an aside to de Marsay.

The ex-clerk from Arcis, ex-representative of the people, ex-Thermidorian, ex-tribune, ex-Councillor of State, ex-

Comte and Senator of the Empire, ex-peer of Louis XVIII., and new peer of July, made a servile reverence to Mme. de Cadignan.

"Tremble no more, fair lady, we do not war on princes," said he, seating himself beside her.

Malin had enjoyed the friendship of Louis XVIII., who frequently availed himself of his experience of men and things. He had assisted materially in the overthrow of Decazes and been a strong supporter of the Villèle ministry. Received with coldness by Charles X., he had espoused the enmity of Talleyrand. He was then high in the favor of the twelfth government that he has served, not without profit to himself, since 1789, and will doubtless "serve," in a different fashion, at what he considers the fitting moment. Within the last fifteen months, however, he had withdrawn from the alliance that for six-and-thirty years had bound him to the most illustrious of our diplomatists. It was during the present evening that, in speaking of that great diplomat, he delivered himself of this *mot*:

"Do you know the reason of his hostility to the Duc de Bordeaux?—The pretender is too young."

"That seems singular advice to give young men," Rastignac rejoined.

De Marsay, to whom the Princesse's remark seemed to have afforded matter for reflection, took no part in this exchange of pleasantries. He cast an occasional covert look at Gondreville, and was evidently reserving what he had to say until the old man, whose habit it was to seek his bed early, should have retired. All the guests, who had witnessed the manner of Mme. de Cinq-Cygne's departure and were acquainted with the reasons for it, imitated de Marsay's silence. Gondreville, who had not seen the Marquise, did not know to what to ascribe the general reserve; but he had acquired tact in the course of his many years of intercourse with men, and moreover he was naturally quick of perception. He thought that for some reason his presence was not desired, and rose to go. De Marsay, standing with his back

to the fire, watched the old man of seventy as he moved slowly to the door, and it was plain from his manner that he was turning over grave considerations in his mind.

"I made a mistake, Madame, in not making you my negotiator," the Prime Minister finally said as the sound of receding carriage wheels reached his ears. "But I will try to rectify my error and afford you means of making your peace with the Cinq-Cygnés. It is more than thirty years since the events that I am going to speak of occurred, so you see they are as antiquated a tale as the death of Henri IV., which, between you and me, in spite of the fact that it has become a proverb, is one of the most imperfectly authenticated occurrences in history. And besides, even if the affair did not concern the Marquise, I assure you that you would find it none the less interesting. Finally, it throws light on a famous passage of our modern annals—the passage of Mount St. Bernard. MM. les Ambassadeurs will see that, in respect of profundity, our politicians of the present day are a long way behind the Machiavels whom, in 1793, the tide of public favor landed high up on the shore where the tempest could not reach them, and some of whom, to use the words of the old song, have since then 'found a haven.' To be something or somebody in France to-day, one must have been buffeted by the storms of those times."

"But it seems to me," interjected the Princesse with a smile, "that if you look at it in that light your present condition of affairs doesn't leave much to be desired."

A well-bred grin overspread all faces, and de Marsay even could not keep back a smile. The ambassadors appeared impatient, de Marsay gave a preliminary cough, and there was silence.

"One night in June, 1800," said the Prime Minister, "about three o'clock, just as the candles were beginning to grow pale in the increasing daylight, two men who had had enough of the bouillotte, or had been playing only to keep the others company, left the salon in the hotel in the Rue du Bac, then occupied by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,



and passed into a boudoir. Of these two men, one of whom is dead and the other has one foot in the grave, each was in his way as remarkable as the other. Both had been priests, both had abjured their vows, both were married. One had been a simple Oratorian, the other had worn a bishop's mitre. The name of the first was Fouché, the name of the second I shall not tell you; both were then simple French citizens, though perhaps simplicity was neither's ruling trait. When they were seen entering the boudoir, the guests who still remained manifested a little curiosity. A third individual rose and followed them. As for this person, who considered himself far superior intellectually to the other two—his name was Sieyès—and you are all aware that he likewise had belonged to the Church before the Revolution. The one who walked with a limp was at that time Minister of Foreign Affairs, Fouché was Minister of Police, and Sieyès had recently resigned from the Consulate. A little spare man, frigid and severe of aspect, got up from his place and joined the trio, remarking audibly in presence of one who repeated his words to me, 'I am afraid of three of a kind—when they are three priests.' He was the Minister of War. Carnot's little joke did not disturb the two Consuls, who were busy over their cards in the salon. Cambacérès and Lebrun were entirely in the power of their ministers, who were men of infinitely more ability than they. Almost all those statesmen are dead now; we owe them nothing further in the way of consideration. They belong to history, and the history of that night was terrible. I tell it you because it is known to me alone, because Louis XVIII. never disclosed the facts to poor Mme. de Cinq-Cygne, and it is not to the interest of the present government to enlighten her. The four men drew up chairs and seated themselves around the table. Before a word was spoken, the lame man got up and closed the door—some say that he even bolted it. Only your well-bred man is capable of looking out for those small matters. The three priests wore the pale and impassive faces with which you are familiar. Carnot's was the only countenance

that showed any trace of color. The soldier was the first to break the silence.

"What is the question before the house?"

"France," doubtless replied the Prince, whom I admire as one of the most remarkable men of our time.

"The Republic," Fouché certainly answered.

"Power," probably said Sieyès."

The company turned on their chairs and looked one another in the face. De Marsay's portrayal of the three men, in tone, look and gesture, was an admirable piece of mimicry.

"The three priests understood one another to a nicety," he continued. "Carnot doubtless looked at his colleagues and the ex-Consul somewhat superciliously. I think though that, inwardly, he felt a little daunted.

"Do you believe we shall be successful?" asked Sieyès.

"We may expect everything from Napoleon," replied the Minister of War. "His passage of the Alps was a success."

"He is playing for heavy stakes," the diplomatist remarked with calculated deliberation; "his all is on the board."

"Well, there is no use beating about the bush," said Fouché. "If the First Consul is beaten what are we to do? Can we raise another army? Are we to remain his humble servants?"

"The Republic no longer exists," observed Sieyès. "He is Consul for ten years."

"He has more power than Cromwell had," the bishop added, "and he did not vote for the King's death."

"We have a master," said Fouché; "the question is, shall we stick to him if he loses the battle, or shall we return to a purely republican form of government?"

"France," Carnot sententiously rejoined, "can only stand up against her enemies by recovering the energy of the Convention."

"I agree with Carnot," said Sieyès. "If Bonaparte

returns a defeated man we must finish him. He has had entirely too much to say during the last seven months.'

" 'He has the army!' Carnot rejoined with a thoughtful air.

" 'And we shall have the people!' exclaimed Fouché.

" 'You are ready with your reply, monsieur!' the *grand seigneur* returned in that deep bass voice for which he is still noted and which silenced the Oratorian.

" 'Be frank, messieurs,' said an old conventionnel, appearing from his place of concealment in a corner; 'if Bonaparte is victorious we will worship him; if he is beaten we will bury him.'

" 'You were there, were you, Malin?' said the master of the house with entire composure. 'You shall be one of us.'

" 'And he motioned to him to be seated. It was to that circumstance that this individual, a rather obscure member of the Convention, owed the position that we see him occupying to-day. Malin was discreet, and the two ministers kept faith with him; but he was also the pivot of the machine and the soul of the combination.

" 'That man is yet to be defeated!' Carnot exclaimed in a tone of conviction. 'He has just accomplished a feat that Hannibal found impossible.

" 'If anything goes wrong, here is the Directorate,' Sieyès semi-seriously observed, calling the attention of the assemblage to the fact that they were five.

" 'And,' said the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 'we are all interested in maintaining the principles of the Revolution. Three of us have discarded the frock, the General voted for the King's death, and you, Malin, are the owner of confiscated estates.'

" 'All of us are actuated by the same interests,' Sieyès didactically declared, 'for are not our and the country's interests identical?'

" 'An unusual condition of affairs,' remarked the diplomatist with a smile.

" 'It is time we were up and doing,' added Fouché.



'The battle is even now in progress, and Mélas's force outnumbered ours. Genoa has surrendered, and Masséna has committed the mistake of embarking for Antibes: it is not certain that he will be able to rejoin Bonaparte, who will have no one to look to for reinforcements.'

" 'Whence had you that news?' asked Carnot.

" 'It is reliable,' Fouché replied. 'The mail will be in against the opening of the Bourse.'

" 'They were not squeamish in their talk, you see,' said de Marsay, smiling and pausing for a moment.

" 'It is not when tidings of the disaster reach us,' Fouché continued, 'that we shall be able to organize clubs, awaken dormant patriotism and change the constitution. We should have our 18th Brumaire ready to launch at any moment.'

" 'We may leave that to the Minister of Police,' said the diplomatist, 'but be careful how you trust Lucien.' (Lucien Bonaparte was then Minister of the Interior.)

" 'I will arrest him,' declared Fouché.

" 'Messieurs,' exclaimed Sieyès, 'our Directorate must no longer be subject to the caprice of anarchical revolutionists. We must organize an oligarchical government—a Senate for life, an elective chamber that shall be completely under our control—for we should learn wisdom from the lessons of the past.'

" 'With a system like that I shall have peace,' observed the bishop.

" 'Find me a safe man to intrust with our correspondence with Moreau, for the army of Germany is going to be our only resource!' exclaimed Carnot, rousing himself suddenly from deep meditation.

" 'There is no denying it, messieurs,' de Marsay continued after a pause, "those men were right! They showed themselves great men at that crisis, and I should have acted just as they did.

" 'Messieurs!—' exclaimed Sieyès, imparting to the word a grave and solemn import," said de Marsay, resuming his narrative.

"The significance of that 'Messieurs!' was plain to every-one: in all eyes were legible a common plighted faith, the common pledge, the pledge of absolute secrecy, of complete solidarity in the event of Napoleon returning a victor.

" 'We all know what we have to do,' added Fouché.

"Sieyès had risen and softly released the bolt; the ear of the former priest had not forgot its cunning. Lucien entered.

" 'Good news, gentlemen! A courier has arrived with a despatch from the First Consul for M<sup>re</sup>. Bonaparte. He has opened the campaign with a victory at Montebello.'

"The three ministers eyed one another in silence.

" 'Was it a general battle?' inquired Carnot.

" 'No, an engagement in which Lannes covered himself with glory. The losses were heavy. Attacked by eighteen thousand men to his ten thousand, he was saved by a division sent to his assistance. Ott is in full flight. And Mélas's line of communication is broken.'

" 'When was the fight?' asked Carnot.

" 'On the 8th,' Lucien replied.

" 'And this is the 13th,' returned the provident minister. 'Well, it may be that the destinies of France are being decided while we sit talking here.' (As a matter of fact the battle of Marengo opened on June 14th at dawn.)

" 'Four days of mortal waiting!' said Lucien.

" 'Mortal?' the Minister of Foreign Affairs coldly and questioningly rejoined.

" 'Four days,' corrected Fouché.

"I have been assured by one who was present at the time that the two consuls received no intimation of the news until the six men returned to the salon. That was about four o'clock in the morning. Fouché was the first to leave. This is what was accomplished, with occult and infernal activity, by that extraordinary man, whose work was always done in silence, whose name was seldom on men's lips, but who in point of genius was certainly not the inferior of Philip II., Tiberius or Borgia. His conduct at the time

of the Walcheren affair was that of a consummate general, a great statesman and a far-sighted administrator. He was the only real minister that Napoleon ever had. You know with what alarm he inspired Bonaparte at that time. Fouché, Masséna and the Prince are the three greatest men, the three longest heads, in the way of diplomacy, war and government, that I know of. If Napoleon had been less suspicious and could have associated them frankly with him in his undertakings, there would be no Europe now, only one vast French empire. Fouché only parted company with Napoleon when he saw Sieyès and Prince Talleyrand shelved. This, then, was what Fouché accomplished: in three days' time, concealing the hand that was stirring the dead ashes on the hearth, he inspired among the people that feeling of universal apprehension which spread over all France and revived the Republican energy of 1793.

"As this dark corner of our history is sadly in need of illumination, I will say to you that it was this agitation, originating with the man who was cognizant of all the secrets of the defunct party of the Mountain, which was responsible for the Republican plots that menaced the life of the First Consul after his victory at Marengo. His conscience smiting him for the mischief he had done, he was impelled to intimate to Bonaparte, notwithstanding the contrary opinion held by the latter, that more Republicans than Royalists were implicated in those enterprises. Fouché's knowledge of men was surprising: he reckoned on Sieyès because of his disappointed ambition, on M. de Talleyrand because of his illustrious birth, on Carnot because of his unquestioned integrity; but he distrusted our man of this evening, and this is how he proceeded to wrap the toils about him. He was only Malin in those days, plain Malin, the correspondent of Louis the Eighteenth. The Minister of Police imposed on him the task of concocting the proclamations of the revolutionary government, of framing its acts and decrees, and the sentence of outlawry against the seditious persons who had borne a part in the doings of



the 18th Brumaire. And, in addition, this accomplice in his own despite was obliged to see to the printing of this incendiary literature, up to the number of copies considered necessary, and store it, done up in bales, in his own house. The printer was arrested for dabbling in conspiracy—for care had been taken to select a revolutionary printer—and it was two months before the police let him go. The man died in 1816, firm in the belief that there had been another conspiracy of the Mountain. One of the strangest episodes participated in by Fouché's police was undoubtedly that which ensued upon the receipt by the leading banker of the time of a first despatch announcing the loss of the battle of Marengo. It was not until seven o'clock in the evening, if you will remember, that fortune declared for Napoleon. At midday the agent representing the monarch of finance at the seat of war believed that the French army must be annihilated, and sent off a courier in hot haste. The Minister of Police sent for the billposters, the bell-men and public criers, and one of his henchmen had driven up with a van loaded with printed matter, when the second courier, who had used his spurs to better purpose than the first, came in and disseminated the tidings of a victory that drove France fairly wild with joy. The billposters and criers who were to have proclaimed Bonaparte's outlawry and political death were kept waiting until the printers had time to work off another set of placards containing another proclamation glorifying the First Consul and his victory. Malin, on whom the entire responsibility for the affair was likely to rest, was so badly frightened that he loaded the bales on carts and sent them down under cover of night to Gondreville, where he doubtless buried the compromising papers in the cellars of the chateau that he had bought not long before in the name of a man—what was his name, now?—Malin had him made president of a *cour imperiale*—oh, I have it, Marion! Then he returned to Paris in sufficient time to be on hand to congratulate the First Consul. Napoleon, as you are aware, after Marengo returned from Italy

to France at whirlwind speed; but only those who are thoroughly acquainted with the secret history of the time know that the celerity of his movements was due to a despatch from Lucien. The Minister of the Interior was suspicious of the attitude of the party of the Mountain, and, without knowing the exact quarter from which the wind blew, he feared the storm. Incapable of suspecting the three ministers, he attributed the movement to the hatred inspired against his brother by the events of the 18th Brumaire, and to the fond anticipation, indulged by the remainder of the men of 1793, of irreparable disaster in Italy. The words "Death to the tyrant!" shouted at Saint-Cloud, were continually ringing in Lucien's ears. The battle of Marengo and its resultant consequences detained Napoleon in the plains of Lombardy until the 25th of June; he reached France on July 2. Imagine, if you can, the faces of the five conspirators congratulating the First Consul on his victory at the Tuileries! Fouché, even in the great man's salon, bade the tribune—for the Malin that you saw recently has been a tribune in his day—to have patience and wait a while, that the end was not yet. The fact was, it did not appear to M. de Talleyrand and Fouché that Bonaparte was wedded quite as securely as they themselves were to the doctrines of the Revolution, so they pitched upon the affair of the Duc d'Enghien as a means of committing him, for their own safety, irrevocably to those doctrines. The execution of the Prince is connected, by perceptible ramifications, with the plot that was hatched that night during the Marengo campaign in the hotel of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Certainly, it is now as plain as day to any one having access to sources of information that Bonaparte was fooled to the top of his bent by Talleyrand and Fouché, who wished to estrange him beyond recall from the House of Bourbon, whose emissaries were even then making fruitless overtures to the First Consul."

At this point one of de Marsay's auditors spoke up.

"Talleyrand, enjoying his game of whist at Mme. de

Luynes',” said he, “at three o'clock in the morning takes out his watch, interrupts the game, and with the most entire irrelevance suddenly inquires of the three persons seated at his table whether the Prince de Condé had other children besides Monsieur le Duc d'Enghien. So preposterous a question, coming from M. de Talleyrand, caused unbounded astonishment. ‘Why do you question us upon a subject on which no one is better informed than yourself?’ he was asked. ‘Because,’ he replied, ‘I wish you should know that at this moment the House of Condé is extinct.’ Now M. de Talleyrand had been at the Hotel de Luynes since early evening, and doubtless knew why it was impossible for Bonaparte to pardon the unfortunate young man.”

“Deucedly interesting story that of yours, de Marsay,” said Rastignac, “but I don’t see where Mme. de Cinq-Cygne comes in.”

“Ah, true, my dear fellow—you were only a lad then—I neglected to give the sequel. You have heard of that business of the Comte de Gondreville’s abduction, which resulted in the death of the Simeuse twins and of the elder brother of our friend d’Hauterierre, who, by his marriage with Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne, became Comte and subsequently Marquis de Cinq-Cygne—”

De Marsay, at the solicitation of several persons unacquainted with the circumstances, related the story of the trial, adding that the five mysterious men were sharp fellows selected from the general police of the Empire and sent down to destroy the bales of printed matter which the Comte de Gondreville, believing the Empire to be an established fact, had himself come down with the express purpose of burning.

“I suspect that Fouché at the same time,” said he, “had a search made for proofs of the correspondence between Gondreville and Louis XVIII., with whom the Comte had maintained an understanding, even during the Terror. In that horrible affair, however, there was a display of extra-



professional feeling on the part of the chief detective, who is still living, one of those great men in a subordinate position whom it is impossible to replace and who has made a name for himself by his wonderful achievements in his line. It seems that Mlle. de Cinq-Cygne was not as considerate toward him as she might have been on the occasion of his visit to arrest the Simeuses. And there, madame, you have the true inwardness of the affair. You can explain it to the Marquise de Cinq-Cygne, and let her know why Louis XVIII. has been so long silent."

PARIS, *January, 1841.*

# AN EPISODE UNDER THE TERROR

TO MONSIEUR GUYONNET-MERVILLE

IT IS no more than right, my dear old master, that I should explain to the inquisitive where I picked up sufficient knowledge of the law to enable me to conduct the affairs of my little world, and at the same time should devote these few lines to the memory of the amiable and accomplished man who, chancing to meet Scribe—another legal tyro—in the ballroom, said to him, “Why don’t you look in at the office? You will find plenty of material there, I assure you”; but I am sure you will not need this public testimonial to convince you of the sincere affection of the author.

DE BALZAC.

*I*N PARIS, on the 22d of January, 1793, about eight o’clock in the evening, an old lady was descending the steep declivity that terminates in the Faubourg Saint-Martin in front of the Church of St. Laurent. It had snowed so persistently all day long that the footsteps of those whose business called them abroad were barely audible. The streets were deserted. The feeling of awe which silence naturally inspires was intensified by the terror which at that time overspread all France, wherefore the old lady had thus far encountered no one. Her eyesight, long since grown dim, moreover, did not enable her to distinguish by the feeble light of the street-lamps the few scattered pedestrians who loomed like spectres through the dense fog that filled the wide faubourg. Alone and unprotected, she pressed on courageously through that solitude, as if her

age had been a talisman to defend her against all evil. When she had passed the Rue des Morts, it seemed to her that she heard the heavy tramp of a man plodding through the snow behind her. The notion possessed her that this was not the first time that she had heard those sounds. She was alarmed to think that she was followed, and made an effort to reach a shop somewhat more brilliantly illuminated than its neighbors, hoping by the friendly light to verify the suspicions that beset her. When she found herself within the circle of light diffused by the shop window she suddenly turned her head and dimly beheld, shrouded in the fog, the outlines of a human form. That indistinctly seen vision sufficed her. She stood for a moment tottering under the weight of terror that oppressed her, for she no longer doubted that she had been dogged by the stranger from the moment when she left her house, and the desire of escaping from a spy lent her increase of strength. Incapable of reasoning, she redoubled her speed, as if she could outstrip a man who could not but be more nimble than she. After a few minutes of swift running she reached the shop of a pastry-cook, entered, and dropped rather than seated herself upon a chair that stood before the counter. As the latch creaked under her hand a young woman seated at her embroidery frame raised her eyes, recognized through the glass of the door the violet-colored silk mantle of antiquated fashion that enwrapped the old lady's form, and, rising hurriedly, went and opened a drawer as if to take from it some object that she was to give the visitor. The young woman's face and manner betrayed an intention to make her interview with the stranger, the sight of whom evidently afforded her no pleasure, as brief as possible, and she gave utterance to an ejaculation of impatience on finding the drawer empty. Then, without condescending to look at the lady, she dashed out from behind the counter, went to the door of the back shop and summoned her husband, who appeared immediately.

"What have you done with the—?" she asked him with



an air of mystery, glancing at the old lady, but not otherwise completing her sentence.

Although nothing of the stranger was visible to the pastry-cook save the huge black silk bonnet plentifully besprinkled with bows of violet-colored ribbon which protected her head, he disappeared after giving his wife a look which seemed to say, "Did you suppose I was going to leave *that* in your drawer?" Surprised to see the old lady so silent and motionless, the shopwoman approached her and, on a closer observation, was moved by an impulse of compassion, and also, perhaps, of curiosity. Although her complexion was naturally white, of the livid whiteness of those addicted to secret austerities, it was manifest that the pallor which now overspread her face was abnormal and due to some recent and extraordinary emotion. Her headgear was so arranged as to conceal her hair, the snowy whiteness of which could have been due to age alone, for the neatness of the collar of her gown told that she did not use powder. The total absence of all ornament gave to her countenance a sort of religious severity. Her features were proud and grave. In bygone times the manners and customs of people of quality were so unlike those of persons belonging to the other classes, that it was an easy matter to distinguish a man or woman of noble birth. The young woman was convinced that the stranger was a *ci-devant* and had belonged to the court.

"Madame—?" said she, hesitatingly and with respect, unmindful of the fact that the law had suppressed all titles.

The old lady made no reply. She kept her eyes fixed on the window of the shop, as if fascinated by some frightful object that she saw there.

"What ails you, citoyenne?" inquired the master of the shop, who reappeared at that juncture.

The citizen pastry-cook aroused the lady from her abstraction by tendering her a little pasteboard box covered with blue paper.

"Nothing, my friends, nothing," she gently replied.

She raised her eyes to the pastry-cook's face as though to thank him, but, observing on his head the *bonnet rouge*, a shriek burst from her lips:

"Ah! you have betrayed me!"

The young woman and her husband replied by a gesture of horror which brought a blush to the stranger's face, perhaps of pleasure, perhaps of shame for having suspected them.

"Excuse me," she said in a voice of childlike sweetness.

Then she took a louis d'or from her pocket and gave it to the pastry-cook.

"That is the sum we agreed upon," she added.

There is a poverty that the poor are apt at divining. The pastry-cook and his wife looked each other in the face, then bent an inquiring gaze on the aged woman, exchanging as they did so a thought that was common to them both. That louis d'or was the last! The lady's hand shook as she tendered the coin, which she contemplated sorrowfully, though not with the eye of avarice; she seemed to realize the full extent of the sacrifice that she was making. Hunger and destitution were written on that face in characters as legible as those described by fear or by habits of asceticism. There were vestiges of vanished splendor in her garments, in the gown of heavy silk that had long since lost its sheen, in the scrupulously neat mantle of the fashion of a generation now dead and gone, in the laces that had been so minutely and laboriously darned and redarned—the shreds and patches of past opulence! The tradespeople, divided between their sentiments of compassion and interest, began by quieting their conscience with words.

"But, citoyenne, thou appearest to be exhausted—"

"Perhaps Madame would feel better if she took something?" suggested the wife, taking the words out of her husband's mouth.

"We have some nice hot bouillon," added the pastry-cook.

"The weather is so abominable, Madame has likely taken

cold while coming here. But you are welcome to remain until you are rested, and warm yourself by our fire."

Encouraged by the kindly accent that pervaded the words of the charitable shopkeepers, the lady confessed that she had been followed by a strange man, and feared to return alone.

"Is it no more than that?" rejoined the man in the bonnet rouge. "Wait a minute, *citoyenne*."

He turned the *louis* over to his wife; then, actuated by that quality of gratitude which is wont to penetrate the intelligence of a tradesman when he has received a conscienceless price for his trumpery wares, he went and donned his National Guard uniform, put on his hat, girded on his sword, and reappeared fully armed and equipped; but his wife had had time to reflect. As is the way with many, reflection closed the opened hand of benvolence. Alarmed and fearing that her husband was brewing trouble for himself, she plucked him by the skirt of his coat in an effort to detain him; but the worthy man, obeying his charitable impulse, blurted out an offer to the old lady to escort her home.

"The man whom the *citoyenne* fears seems to be still prowling about the door," the young woman said.

"I am afraid of him," the old lady naïvely declared.

"Suppose he is a spy—suppose it's a conspiracy! Don't go—take back the box—"

These words, breathed in the pastry-cook's ear by his better half, cooled the impromptu courage that had so lately possessed him.

"Eh! I'll just go and say two words in the fellow's ear, and rid you of him in short order!" exclaimed the pastry-cook, opening the door and stepping hurriedly outside.

The old lady, half-dazed and passive as a child, resumed her seat. The two women had not long to wait for the doughty guardsman's return. His face, whose naturally ruddy complexion had been dyed a still deeper red by the fires of his range, had suddenly become ghastly white; so



great was his terror that his legs shook under him, and he had the wild-eyed look of a drunken man.

"You would send us to the guillotine, would you, miserable aristocrat?" he screamed in his fury. "Come now, be off with you, and never show your face here again! You need not think you are going to involve me in your conspiracies."

At the same time the pastry-cook attempted to take from the old lady the little box which she had thrust into one of her pockets. She had scarcely more than felt the touch of the man's audacious hands upon her garments, however, than the stranger, preferring, rather than lose that which she had just bought and paid for, to brave the perils of the way with no protection save God's, recovered the agility of youth. She darted to the door, threw it wide open, and vanished from the sight of the husband and wife whom she left trembling and confounded. As soon as she found herself once more upon the sidewalk the old lady pushed ahead with the best speed she could muster, but it was not long before her strength began to leave her; for she could hear the snow creaking under the heavy tread of the relentless spy close at her heels. She was compelled to stop, he stopped also. Whether as a result of the great fear that she was laboring under or from lack of intelligence, she dared not look at or speak to him. She resumed her way, walking less rapidly; the man accommodated his steps to hers in a manner that enabled him to keep her within sight. One would have said he was the aged woman's shadow.

The bells were announcing the hour of nine as the silent pair again passed St. Laurent's Church. It is true of all natures, even the weakest, that violent agitation is succeeded by a period of calm; for if sentiment is boundless, our organs are finite. The stranger, therefore, receiving no molestation from him whom she had taken to be her persecutor, chose to see in him a secret friend whose object was her protection; she called to mind all the circumstances that had attended the unknown man's appearances, as if seeking

to discover arguments confirmatory of that comfortable opinion, and arrived at the conclusion that his intentions were rather good than evil. Forgetting the terror that the man had inspired in the pastry-cook, she advanced with a firmer step and struck into the upper regions of the Faubourg Saint-Martin, and after a half-hour's walk came to a house situated at the intersection of the main street of the faubourg and the narrower one which leads to the Barrière de Pantin. This locality is, even at the present day, one of the quietest and loneliest spots in all Paris. The north wind, swooping down from the Buttes Chaumont and de Belleville, blew through the houses—or hovels, rather—that were sparsely scattered about the almost uninhabited valley where the inclosing walls were built of mud and bones. The desolate spot seemed the natural dwelling-place of destitution and despair. The man who had shown such keenness in his pursuit of the poor creature who was sufficiently bold to traverse by night those silent streets appeared struck by the spectacle that presented itself to his view. He stood lost in thought, in an attitude of hesitation, his form dimly visible by the flickering light of the street-lamp that did its poor best to pierce the fog. Fear lent eyes to the old woman, who thought she could distinguish something sinister in the strange man's features; she felt her former terrors creeping over her again, and took advantage of the man's seeming uncertainty to glide amid the shadows up to the door of the solitary house, where she touched a button and vanished as if by magic. The unknown man, motionless as a statue, stood contemplating the house, which may be said to have afforded a type of the wretched habitations of the faubourg. The dilapidated structure, built of stone blocks covered with a coat of yellow plaster, was so seamed and cracked that one expected to see it fall in ruins with every breath of wind. The roof, of brown tiles overgrown with moss, had settled in spots in such a manner as to make it appear inevitable that it must give way under the superincumbent weight of snow. Each floor had three

windows, of which the wooden frames, rotted by moisture and shrunk by the action of the sun, told how the cold must penetrate the chambers. The lonely, isolated house reminded one of an old tower that Time had forgotten to demolish. A dim light was visible in the three windows irregularly placed in the mansard roof that topped this poor edifice, the remainder of the house was in complete obscurity. The old woman groped her way painfully up the narrow, unlighted staircase, a rope stretched at the side of which served the purpose of a banister. She knocked mysteriously at the door of the apartment in the attic, and dropped down precipitately upon the chair that was handed her by an old man.

"Quick, conceal yourself!" she said to him. "Although we stir abroad so seldom, all we do is known, our every step is watched."

"What is there new?" asked another old woman from her place before the fire.

"The man who has been prowling about the house since yesterday followed me this evening."

At these words the three occupants of the squalid room exchanged a glance expressive of the deepest terror. The old man was the least agitated of the three, perhaps because his was the greatest danger. Under the oppression of great calamity or the yoke of persecution, a brave man begins, as we may say, by making the sacrifice of himself; he regards his days as so many victories wrested from fate. The looks of the two women, bent on the old man, showed with sufficient clearness that he was the sole object of their solicitude.

"Why despair of God, my sisters?" said he in deep, impressive accents. "We sang His praises amid the shouts of the murderers and the groans of the dying at the convent of the Carmelites. If He saw fit that I should be saved from that slaughter, it was doubtless to reserve me for a destiny which, be it what it may, it is my duty to accept without repining. God protects His people; it is His to



dispose of them in accordance with His will. It is of you, and not of me, that we must think."

"Not so, father," replied one of the two aged females; "what is our life compared with a priest's?"

"When I saw myself no longer an inmate of the Abbey of Chelles, I looked on myself as one dead," declared that one of the women who had not left the house.

"Here," said she who had just come in, handing the priest the little blue-covered box—"here are the consecrated wafers— But hark! I hear some one on the stairs."

All assumed a listening attitude. The sounds ceased.

"Do not be alarmed," said the priest, "if some one should attempt to gain access to us. A person on whose fidelity we can rely has it in hand to arrange for crossing the frontier, and will come to take away the letters that I have written to the Duc de Langeais and the Marquis de Beauséant, to urge them to devise means for getting you out of this horrid country and saving you from the slow death by starvation that awaits you here."

"And you will not come with us?" the two nuns softly exclaimed in an accent almost of despair.

"My place is where there are victims," the priest rejoined with the utmost simplicity. The nuns looked up at him in silent admiration.

"Sister Marthe," he continued, addressing the nun who had gone in quest of the wafers, "the messenger will reply, 'Fiat Voluntas,' to our password, which is 'Hosanna.'"

"There is some one on the stairs!" exclaimed the other nun, running and opening the door of a secret chamber that had been arranged among the timbers of the roof.

There could be no mistake this time; in the deep silence that prevailed they heard the heavy tread of a man as he came lumbering up the stairs over the bosses and ridges formed by the mud that had been accumulating and hardening there for many years. With some squeezing the priest wormed himself into the retreat provided for him, a mere cupboard, and the nun threw some garments over him.

"You may close the door now, Sister Agathe," said he in a smothered voice.

Scarcely was the priest ensconced in his narrow quarters when three raps upon the door caused the two holy women to start violently. They looked at each other helplessly, neither of them daring to speak a word. They appeared to be of the same age, sixty or thereabout. Severed from the world for the last forty years, they were like plants accustomed to the temperature of a greenhouse, that die if removed to the open air. Habituated to the life of the convent, it was utterly beyond them to conceive of any other. When the iron gates were broken down one morning they had shuddered on discovering that they were free. It is easy to imagine the effect, amounting almost to imbecility, that the events of the Revolution had produced in their innocent souls. Finding the training received at the convent of no service to them in life's stern realities, incapable even of comprehending their position, they were like children who, deserted by their maternal providence after having been tenderly cared for all their days, should, instead of crying, have recourse to prayer. And so, in presence of the danger that they saw threatening them at that juncture, they remained mute and passive, knowing no other means of defence than Christian resignation. The man who had sought entrance interpreted their silence in his own way—he opened the door and suddenly presented himself before them. The two nuns shuddered as they recognized in him the person who had been haunting their neighborhood for some time past and picking up crumbs of information respecting their habits and mode of life; they did not stir, but stood watching his movements with anxiety and breathless curiosity, much as an untutored child will silently scrutinize a stranger. The man was of more than average stature and stout, but there was nothing either in his face or in his manner and appearance that denoted malevolence. He emulated the nuns in their immobility, and allowed his gaze to wander slowly about the chamber in which he found himself.

Two straw mats, laid upon the bare boards, served as a bed for the two nuns. A round table occupied the middle of the room, on which were displayed a brass candlestick, a few plates, three knives, and a loaf, a round loaf, of bread. A consumptive-looking fire was burning on the hearth, and a small pile of chips and shavings carefully bestowed in a corner spoke eloquently of the recluses' poverty. The walls betrayed the bad condition of the roofs, for the ancient coat of yellow paint that covered them displayed a tracery of brown stains, running like rivers from ceiling to floor, indicating where the rain-water had penetrated from above. A holy relic, saved doubtless by pious hands what time the Abbey of Chelles was sacked, graced the mantel-shelf. The above articles, with three chairs, two trunks and a crazy commode, comprised the furniture of the apartment. A door cut in the wall beside the chimney allowed one to conjecture that there might be a second chamber.

The inventory of the cell was soon made by the individual who had introduced himself under such terrible auspices into the bosom of the little household. An expression of pity was visible on his face, and he looked kindly on the two women; his embarrassment was certainly not less than theirs. But the awkward silence that had paralyzed the tongues of all three of them did not last long, for the stranger at last divined the mental incapacity and inexperience of the two poor creatures, and said to them in a voice from which he tried his best to eliminate the gruffness—

“I am not here as an enemy, citoyennes—”

He stopped, and, correcting himself, continued—

“Sisters, if any ill befalls you, believe me, I shall not have had a hand in it. I have a favor to request of you.”

They still maintained silence.

“If my presence is distasteful to you, if—I am not wanted here, speak out, I will withdraw; but be assured that I am entirely devoted to you. If there is any service that I can render you, command me without hesitation; I



alone perhaps am higher than the law, since we no longer have a king."

His words breathed such an accent of sincerity that Sister Agathe—she was a relation of the Langeais family, and her manner seemed to indicate that she had at one time known the splendor of the court and participated in its revelries—made haste to point to a chair as an intimation to the visitor to be seated. There were mingled pleasure and melancholy on the stranger's face when he grasped the meaning of the gesture, and he waited to take his place until he had seen the two ladies of gentle birth assume their chairs.

"You are harboring," he went on, "a venerable priest who has not taken the statutory oaths, and who miraculously escaped the massacre of the Carmelites."

"*Hosanna!*" exclaimed Sister Agathe, interrupting the stranger and eying him with uneasy curiosity.

"That doesn't seem to me to be his name," he replied.

"But, Monsieur," Sister Marthe eagerly declared, "we have no priest here, and—"

"You should have your wits about you and be more cautious," rejoined the stranger, stretching out his hand and taking a breviary from the table. "I don't suppose that you are Latin scholars, and—"

He went no further, for the distress that he saw depicted on the faces of the poor nuns led him to believe that he had said too much; they were all a-tremble, and the tears welled up into their eyes.

"There is no occasion for alarm," said he, frankly and reassuringly. "I know the name of your guest, and yours as well. For three days I have known of your distress and your sacrifices for the venerable Abbé of—"

"'Sh!" Sister Agathe naively ejaculated, laying her finger on her lips.

"You can see, sisters, that if the abominable design or betraying you had occurred to me, I have had more than one opportunity of—"

The priest, hearing these words, released himself from his prison and came forward into the room.

"I cannot believe, Monsieur," said he, addressing the stranger, "that you are one of our persecutors, and I will trust you. What would you have me do?"

The priest's generous confidence, the nobility written on his every feature, would have disarmed assassins. The mysterious person whose visit had served to animate momentarily that scene of distress and resignation surveyed for an instant the group composed of those three beings; then, lowering his voice to a confidential tone, he addressed the priest in these terms—

"Father, I am here to entreat you to celebrate a mortuary mass for the repose of the soul of—of a sacred person whose remains will never rest in holy ground."

The priest could not help shivering. The two nuns, who did not as yet know whom the unknown man might have in mind, stood by in an attitude of curiosity, their necks extended, their faces turned on the two interlocutors. The ecclesiastic scrutinized the stranger: the anxiety depicted on his face was not assumed, his eyes expressed ardent entreaty.

"Well," replied the priest, "return at midnight, and I will be prepared to perform the only mortuary service that it is permitted us to offer in expiation of the crime of which you speak."

The unknown started, but a satisfaction, at the same time pleasurable and grave, appeared to triumph over a secret regret. He went his way, after a respectful leave taken of the priest and the two holy women, evincing a sort of mute gratitude that was felt and appreciated by those three generous souls. About two hours later the stranger returned, knocked discreetly on the door of the garret, and was admitted by Mlle. de Beauséant, who ushered him into the second chamber of the modest apartment, where everything had been made ready for the ceremony. The two nuns had brought in the old commode and placed

it in the recess formed by the divergent flues of the chimney; its unsightly contours were concealed under a magnificent altar cloth of green moire. A great crucifix of ebony and ivory accentuated the nakedness of the yellow wall to which it was attached and was the first object to attract the attention of those entering the room. Four little attenuated wax candles, that the good sisters had contrived to affix to the improvised altar with the assistance of some sealing-wax, dispensed a light of which a large portion was swallowed up by the dull bare walls. This ineffectual light did not go far toward dispelling the darkness of the rest of the chamber; but, by shedding its radiance only upon the holy objects, it resembled a ray sent down from heaven expressly to gild that unornamented altar. The floor was damp. The roof, which came down on the two sides at a sharp angle, as is the way with attic roofs, was pierced with numerous chinks and crannies through which the icy blasts found entrance. Nothing could be less ostentatious, and yet perhaps nothing was more solemn than that lugubrious ceremony. A profound silence, amid which the faint murmurs in the street below sounded with startling distinctness, lent a sort of sombre majesty to the nocturnal scene. Finally, the grandeur of the action was in such striking contrast with the smallness and poverty of the means that there resulted from it a sentiment of religious awe. On either side of the altar the two aged recluses, kneeling, regardless of its mortal humidity, on the tile-paved floor, prayed in unison with the priest, who, attired in his vestments, was placing in position a golden chalice set with valuable gems, one of the sacred vessels, doubtless, saved from the pillage of the Abbey of Chelles. Beside this ciborium, monument of a royal magnificence, stood two common tumblers, scarce worthy of the lowest pothouse, containing the water and the wine to be used in the holy sacrifice. Being unprovided with a missal, the priest had placed his breviary on a corner of the altar. For the ablutions of those whose hands were innocent and pure of stain of blood a common



soup-plate had been provided. All was at the same time immense and infinitely little, poor and noble, profane and sacred. The unknown stationed himself between the two nuns and knelt devoutly. But suddenly perceiving the folds of crape that draped the chalice and the crucifix—for the priest, in his inability to announce in whose behalf the mass was celebrated, had put God Himself in mourning—he was assailed by memories so poignant that the perspiration came out and stood in great drops upon his broad forehead. Then the four silent actors in this scene looked mysteriously at one another, and their souls, acting and reacting the one upon the other, interchanged the common thought that was within them and were fused and made one in one great sentiment of religious commiseration. It seemed as if their prayer had evoked the martyr whose remains had been consumed with quicklime, and that his shade stood there before them in all his royal majesty. They were celebrating an *obit*, from which the corpse was absent. Beneath that roof of loosened, clattering tiles four Christians were about to intercede with God for a King of France, to conduct his obsequies without a coffin. It was the purest of all devotions, an astonishing exhibition of fidelity in which there was no self-seeking. In the eyes of God, doubtless, it was as the cup of cold water that offsets the greatest virtues. All the monarchy was there, in the prayers of a priest and two poor women; but perhaps the Revolution also was represented in the person of that man whose face betrayed such depths of remorse that one could not help believing that he was accomplishing the vows of an immense repentance.

Instead of repeating the Latin words, *Introibo ad altare Dei*, etc., the priest, as though by divine inspiration, looked at the three assistants who represented Christian France, and, as if he would have them forget the squalor of their surroundings, said:

"We are about to enter the sanctuary of God!"

At these words, pronounced with penetrating fervor, an awe akin to terror overcame the stranger and the two nuns.

Under the vaulted roof of St. Peter's at Rome God could not have shown Himself in greater might and majesty than He did then to the eyes of those Christians in that abode of indigence; so true is it that as between man and Him all mediation seems useless and that His glory and grandeur emanate entirely from Himself. The stranger's fervor was genuine, and therefore the sentiment which united the prayers of those four servants of God and of the King was unanimous. The sacred words resounded like celestial music in the silence. There was a moment when the unknown gave way to tears; it was at the "Pater Noster," which the priest supplemented with this prayer in Latin, the words of which the stranger doubtless understood:

"Et remitti scelus regicidis sicut Ludovicus eis remisit semet ipse!" (And forgive the regicides as Louis himself forgave them.)

The sisters saw two big tears roll down the bronzed cheeks of the unknown and fall upon the floor. The office of the dead was recited. The "Domine salvum fac regem," sung below their breath, proved deeply affecting to those faithful Royalists, who reflected that the boy-king for whom they were putting up prayers to the Most High, was a captive in the hands of his enemies. The stranger shuddered at the reflection that doubtless there would be yet another crime committed in which he would be compelled to bear a part. When the service was ended the priest made a sign to the nuns, and they withdrew. When he was alone with the stranger, he approached him with a gentle and melancholy air and said to him paternally:

"My son, if you were concerned in the death of the martyr King, confide in me. There is no offence that may not be effaced in the eyes of God by a repentance as sincere and touching as yours appears to be."

At the first words spoken by the ecclesiastic the stranger could not repress an involuntary movement of terror, but he quickly regained his self-control and looked the astonished priest steadily in the face

"Father," said he in a perceptibly changed voice, "no one is more innocent than I of the blood that was shed."

"I am forced to believe you," replied the priest.

There was a pause, during which he again scrutinized his penitent, but, holding to his original belief that the man was one of those weak-kneed conventionnels who bartered a life that should have been held sacred and inviolate for safety for themselves, he resumed in impressive tones:

"Remember, my son, that to secure absolution for that heinous crime, the plea will not suffice that you had no active share in it. Those who, having it in their power to defend the King, left their sword idle in the scabbard, will have a long account to settle with the King of Heaven—yes," added the aged priest, emphasizing his words with an impressive gesture of the head, "far longer than they suppose! For, by remaining inactive, they made themselves the involuntary accomplices of the perpetrators of that frightful iniquity."

"Is it your opinion," asked the stranger with an expression of doubt and wonder, "that indirect participation will entail punishment? Does the soldier in the ranks, who obeys the orders of his superiors, incur the guilt of murder?"

The priest appeared undecided. Rejoiced to see the predicament to which he had reduced this intractable supporter of royalty by placing him between the doctrine of passive obedience—which, as the partisans of monarchy taught, should be the life and essence of all military codes—and the no less important dogma which enforces the respect due to the personality of kings, the stranger thought he could see in the priest's hesitation a favorable solution of the doubts by which he was distracted. Not to give the venerable Jansenist longer time for reflection, he continued:

"I should feel ashamed to offer you a money consideration for the mortuary service which you have just celebrated



for the repose of the King's soul and the comfort of my conscience. An inestimable service can only be fittingly recompensed by an offering that is also beyond price. Oblige me, therefore, Monsieur, by accepting the gift which I make you of a sacred relic. There will come a day, perhaps, when you will appreciate its value."

Saying these words the stranger presented to the ecclesiastic a small box of inconsiderable weight. The priest took it from him involuntarily, so to speak, for the solemnity of the man's words, the significance he imparted to them, and the respect with which he handled the box had excited his surprise and curiosity. They returned to the outer room, where the two sisters were awaiting them.

"You are living in a house," said the stranger, "of which the owner—that Mucius Scævola, the plasterer, who occupies the first floor—is renowned in the section for his patriotism; but he is secretly attached to the Bourbon cause. He was formerly a *piqueur* in the service of the Prince de Conti, and is indebted to him for his fortune. By continuing to be his tenants you will be safer than you could be in any other spot of France. I advise you to remain here. Pious persons will provide for your necessities, and you can wait here in safety for the dawn of better days. In a year from now, on the 21st of January"—he was unable to conceal his emotion as he uttered these words—"if you are still living in these cheerless quarters, I will return and celebrate with you the expiatory mass—"

He did not complete his sentence. He bowed to the mute inhabitants of the garret, cast a last look on the evidences that attested their poverty, and disappeared.

Such an adventure, for the two unsophisticated nuns, had all the thrilling interest of a romance; when, therefore, the venerable Abbé had told them of the gift conferred with such solemnity by the mysterious man, they placed the box upon the table, and the three eager, anxious faces, dimly illuminated by the single candle, betrayed an indescribable curiosity. Mlle. de Langeais opened the box and found in

it a handkerchief of filmiest lawn, soiled with sweat; on unfolding it they observed discolorations.

"It is blood!" said the priest.

"It is stamped with the royal crown!" exclaimed one of the sisters.

The two sisters in their horror let the precious relic fall from their hands. The mystery that enshrouded the stranger, to those two simple souls, became inexplicable, and as for the priest, from that day forth he made no effort to account for it.

The three prisoners were not long in perceiving that, in spite of the Terror, a powerful hand was extended over them. In the beginning they received firewood and provisions; then the two nuns saw that a woman was associated with their protector, when linen was sent them, and clothing that enabled them to go abroad without attracting attention by the aristocratic fashion of the garments that they had been compelled to wear for lack of others, and finally Mucius Scævola provided them with tickets of citizenship. Information necessary to the priest's safety often reached him through mysterious channels, and such was the timeliness of these warnings that he saw they could only emanate from some one conversant with government affairs. Notwithstanding the scarcity which caused so much suffering in Paris, the proscribed ones found at the door of their garret rations of white bread, a great luxury, which were regularly brought and left there by invisible hands; but they thought they recognized in Mucius Scævola the mysterious agent of this beneficence, ever as ingenious as it was intelligent. The noble denizens of the garret had no doubt that their protector was the person who had come to celebrate with them the expiatory mass of the night of the 22d of January, 1793. He therefore became the object of a sort of private adoration on the part of those three beings, whose hopes all centred in him, who lived through him. They supplemented their accustomed prayers with special petitions for him; night and morning those pious souls framed supplications for his hap-

piness, his prosperity, his safety, and besought God to keep him from all pitfalls and ambushes, to deliver him from his enemies, and to grant him a long and peaceful life. From this gratitude of theirs, renewed, so to speak, from day to day, there naturally sprang a feeling of curiosity which daily became more lively. The circumstances attending the stranger's appearance formed the subject of their conversations, they indulged in all manner of speculation regarding him, and the distraction that he afforded them was an additional benefit conferred. They promised themselves that when the stranger should return, in accordance with his promise, to observe with them the sad anniversary of the death of Louis XVI., he should not escape without some evidence of their affection. That night, awaited with such impatience, came at last. At midnight the sound of the unknown's heavy steps resounded on the old staircase. The chamber had been put in order for the occasion, the altar was erected. The sisters threw wide the door without waiting for his knock and held candles to dispel the darkness on the stairs. Mlle. de Langeais, in her impatience to greet her benefactor, even ran down a few steps.

"Come," said she, in tones of affection and deep feeling, "come, we were waiting for you."

The man raised his head, cast a sombre look on the sister, and made no reply; she felt as if a garment of ice had fallen on her shoulders and was silent; at sight of him gratitude and curiosity faded from all hearts. He was perhaps less cold, less taciturn, less terrible than he appeared to his hosts, whom their enthusiasm had predisposed to be effusive in the manifestation of their friendship. The three poor prisoners, who saw that their benefactor wished to remain a stranger to them, accepted the situation. The priest thought he detected an incipient smile on the lips of the unknown when he observed the preparations that had been made for his reception; he heard mass and united with them in prayer, but took his departure immediately afterward, having first declined, with a few polite words of thanks, the



invitation extended to him by Mlle. de Langeais to remain and share the little collation that they had prepared for him.

After the 9th of Thermidor the nuns and Abbé de Marolles were able to go about Paris entirely unmolested. On the occasion of the first of the aged priest's walks abroad he availed himself of the opportunity to visit a perfumery shop, at the sign of "la Reine des Fleurs," kept by Citizen and Citizeness Ragon, former perfumers to the Court, who had remained faithful to the royal family, and whose services were employed by the Vendéans to maintain a correspondence with the Princes and the Royalist committee at Paris. The Abbé, dressed in conformity with the exigencies of the time, was standing on the steps of the shop—which was situated between the church of Saint-Roch and the Rue des Frondeurs—when a crowd poured into the Rue Saint-Honoré, blocking it and preventing his departure.

"What is it?" he inquired of Mme. Ragon.

"Oh, nothing," she replied; "only the cart and the executioner on their way to the Place Louis XV. Ah! many a time last year we saw it, to our sorrow; but now, four days after the anniversary of the 21st of January, one can look at the horrible procession with equanimity."

"Why so?" asked the Abbé. "Don't you know that what you say is unchristianlike?"

"Eh! it is Robespierre's accomplices going to their execution. They fought it off as long as they could, but it's their turn now, and they're going to taste the cup from which they made so many innocent people drink."

The crowd surged by like a tumultuous sea. Incited by his curiosity, the Abbé de Marolles, peering over the heads of those in front of him, descried, standing in the cart among the rest of the condemned, the man who three days previously had listened to his mass.

"Who is that?" he asked; "the man who—"

"That?—that is Jack Ketch," replied M. Ragon, giving to the *exécuteur des hautes œuvres* the sobriquet applied to him by the Monarchists.

"My friend, my friend," cried Mme. Ragon, "M. le Abbé is dying!"

And the lady ran and got a bottle of vinegar to revive the aged priest from his swoon.

"It must have been the handkerchief that the King used to wipe his forehead with on his way to martyrdom that he gave me," said he. "Poor man!—The keen knife had a heart when all the rest of France had none!"

The perfumers thought that the poor Abbé was delirious.

PARIS, *January, 1831.*

# THE SEAMY SIDE OF HISTORY

## FIRST EPISODE

MADAME DE LA CHANTERIE

**O**NE FINE September evening, in the year 1836, a man of about thirty was leaning over the parapet of the quay at a point whence the Seine may be surveyed up stream from the Jardin des Plantes to Notre-Dame, and down in grand perspective to the Louvre.

There is no such view elsewhere in the Capital of Ideas (Paris). You are standing, as it were, on the poop of a vessel that has grown to vast proportions. You may dream there of Paris from Roman times to the days of the Franks, from the Normans to the Burgundians, through the Middle Ages to the Valois, Henri IV., Napoleon, and Louis Philippe. There is some vestige or building of each period to bring it to mind. The dome of Sainte-Geneviève shelters the Quartier Latin. Behind you rises the magnificent east end of the Cathedral. The Hotel de Ville speaks of all the revolutions, the Hotel Dieu of all the miseries of Paris. After glancing at the splendors of the Louvre, take a few steps, and you can see the rags that hang out from the squalid crowd of houses that huddle between the Quai de la Tournelle and the Hotel Dieu; the authorities are, however, about to clear them away.

In 1836 this astonishing picture inculcated yet another lesson. Between the gentleman who leaned over the parapet and the Cathedral, the deserted plot, known of old as le Terrain, was still strewn with the ruins of the Archbishop's palace. As we gaze there on so many suggestive objects, as the mind takes in the past and the present of the city of



Paris, Religion seems to have established herself there that she might lay her hands on the sorrows on both sides of the river, from the Faubourg Saint-Antoine to the Faubourg Saint-Marceau.

It is to be hoped that these sublime harmonies may be completed by the construction of an Episcopal palace in a Gothic style to fill the place of the meaningless buildings that now stand between the Island, the Rue d'Arcole, and the Quai de la Cité.

This spot, the very heart of old Paris, is beyond anything deserted and melancholy. The waters of the Seine break against the wall with a loud noise, the Cathedral throws its shadow there at sunset. It is not strange that vast thoughts should brood there in a brain-sick man. Attracted perhaps by an accordance between his own feelings at the moment and those to which such a varied prospect must give rise, the loiterer folded his hands over the parapet, lost in the twofold contemplation of Paris and of himself! The shadows spread, lights twinkled into being, and still he did not stir; carried on as he was by the flow of a mood of thought, big with the future, and made solemn by the past.

At this instant he heard two persons approaching, whose voices had been audible on the stone bridge where they had crossed from the Island of the Cité to the Quai de la Tour-nelle. The two speakers no doubt believed themselves to be alone, and talked somewhat louder than they would have done in a more frequented place, or if they had noticed the propinquity of a stranger. From the bridge their tones betrayed an eager discussion, bearing, as it seemed from a few words that reached the involuntary listener, on a loan of money. As they came closer, one of the speakers, dressed as a working man, turned from the other with a gesture of despair. His companion looked round, called the man back, and said—

“You have not a sou to pay the bridge-toll. Here!”—and he gave him a coin—“and remember, my friend, it is

God Himself who speaks to us when a good thought occurs to us."

The last words startled the dreamer. The man who spoke had no suspicion that, to use a proverbial expression, he was killing two birds with one stone; that he spoke to two unhappy creatures—a workman at his wits' end, and a soul without a compass; a victim of what Panurge's sheep call Progress, and a victim of what France calls equality.

These words, simple enough in themselves, acquired grandeur from the tone of the speaker, whose voice had a sort of magical charm. Are there not such voices, calm and sweet, affecting us like a view of the distant ocean?

The speaker's costume showed him to be a priest, and his face, in the last gleam of twilight, was pale, and dignified, though worn. The sight of a priest coming out of the grand Cathedral of Saint Stephen at Vienna to carry extreme unction to a dying man, persuaded Werner, the famous tragic poet, to become a Catholic. The effect was much the same on our Parisian when he saw the man who, without intending it, had brought him consolation; he discerned on the dark line of his horizon in the future a long streak of light where the blue of heaven was shining, and he followed the path of light, as the shepherds of the Gospel followed the voice that called to them from on high, "Christ the Lord is born!"

The man of healing speech walked on under the Cathedral, and by favor of Chance—which is sometimes consistent—made his way toward the street from which the loiterer had come, and whither he was returning, led there by his own mistakes in life.

This young man's name was Godefroid. As this narrative proceeds, the reader will understand the reasons for giving to the actors in it only their Christian names.

And this is the reason why Godefroid, who lived near the *Chausée d'Antin*, was lingering at such an hour under the shadow of *Notre-Dame*.

He was the son of a retail dealer, who, by economy, had

made some little fortune, and in him centred all the ambitions of his parents, who dreamed of seeing him a notary in Paris. At the early age of seven he had been sent to a school, kept by the Abbé Liautard, where he was thrown together with the children of certain families of distinction, who had selected this establishment for the education of their sons, out of attachment to religion, which, under the emperor, was somewhat too much neglected in the Lycées, or public schools. At that age social inequalities are not recognized between schoolfellows; but in 1821, when his studies were finished, Godefroid, articled to a notary, was not slow to perceive the distance that divided him from those with whom he had hitherto lived on terms of intimacy.

While studying the law, he found himself lost in the crowd of young men of the citizen class, who, having neither a ready-made fortune nor hereditary rank, had nothing to look to but their personal worth or persistent industry. The hopes built upon him by his father and mother, who had now retired from business, stimulated his conceit without giving him pride. His parents lived as simply as Dutch folk, not spending more than a quarter of their income of twelve thousand francs; they intended to devote their savings, with half their capital, to the purchase of a connection for their son. Godefroid, reduced also to live under the conditions of this domestic thrift, regarded them as so much out of proportion to his parents' dreams and his own that he felt disheartened. In weak characters such discouragement leads to envy. While many other men, in whom necessity, determination, and good sense were more marked than talent, went straight and steadfastly onward in the path laid down for modest ambitions, Godefroid waxed rebellious, longed to shine, insisted on facing the brightest light, and so dazzled his eyes. He tried to "get on," but all his efforts ended in demonstrating his incapacity. At last, clearly perceiving too great a discrepancy between his desires and his prospects, he con-



ceived a hatred of social superiority; he became a Liberal, and tried to make himself famous by a book; but he learned, to his cost, to regard talent much as he regarded rank. Having tried by turns the profession of notary, the bar, and literature, he now aimed at the higher branch of the law.

At this juncture his father died. His mother, content in her old age with two thousand francs a year, gave up almost her whole fortune to his use. Possessor now, at five-and-twenty, of ten thousand francs a year, he thought himself rich, and he was so as compared with the past. Hitherto his life had been a series of acts with no will behind them, or of impotent willing; so, to keep pace with the age, to act, to become a personage, he tried to get into some circle of society by the help of his money.

At first he fell in with journalism, which has always an open hand for any capital that comes in its way. Now, to own a newspaper is to be a Personage; it means employing talent and sharing its successes without dividing its labors. Nothing is more tempting to second-rate men than thus to rise by the brains of others. Paris has had a few *parvenus* of this type, whose success is a disgrace both to the age and to those who have lent a lifting shoulder.

In this class of society Godefroid was soon cut out by the vulgar cunning of some and the extravagance of others, by the money of ambitious capitalists or the manœuvring of editors; then he was dragged into the dissipations that a literary or political life entails, the habits of critics behind the scenes, and the amusements needed by men who work their brains hard. Thus he fell into bad company; but he there learned that he was an insignificant-looking person, and that he had one shoulder higher than the other without redeeming this malformation by any distinguished ill-nature or wit. Bad manners are a form of self-payment which actors snatch by telling the truth.

Short, badly made, devoid of wit or of any strong bent, all seemed at an end for a young man at a time when for

success in any career the highest gifts of mind are as nothing without luck, or the tenacity which commands luck.

The Revolution of 1830 poured oil on Godefroid's wounds; he found the courage of hope, which is as good as that of despair. Like many another obscure journalist, he got an appointment where his liberal ideas, at loggerheads with the demands of a newly-established power, made him but a refractory instrument. Veneered only with liberalism, he did not know, as superior men did, how to hold his own. To obey the Ministry was to him to surrender his opinions. And the Government itself seemed to him false to the laws that had given rise to it. Godefroid declared in favor of *movement* when what was needed was tenacity; he came back to Paris almost poor, but faithful to the doctrines of the opposition.

Alarmed by the licentiousness of the press, and yet more by the audacity of the republican party, he sought in retirement the only life suited to a being of incomplete faculties, devoid of such force as might defy the rough jolting of political life, weary, too, of repeated failures, of suffering and struggles which had won him no glory; and friendless, because friendship needs conspicuous qualities or defects, while possessing feelings that were sentimental rather than deep. Was it not, in fact, the only prospect open to a young man who had already been several times cheated by pleasure, and who had grown prematurely old from friction in a social circle that never rests nor lets others rest.

His mother, who was quietly dying in the peaceful village of Auteuil, sent to her son to come to her, as much for the sake of having him with her as to start him in the road where he might find the calm and simple happiness that befits such souls. She had at last taken Godefroid's measure when she saw that at eight-and-twenty he had reduced his whole fortune to four thousand francs a year; his desires blunted, his fancied talents extinct, his energy nullified, his ambition crushed, and his hatred for every one who

rose by legitimate effort increased by his many disappointments.

She tried to arrange a marriage for Godefroid with the only daughter of a retired merchant, thinking that a wife might be a guardian to his distressful mind, but the old father brought the mercenary spirit that abides in those who have been engaged in trade to bear on the question of settlements. At the end of a year of attentions and intimacy, Godefroid's suit was rejected. In the first place, in the opinion of these case-hardened traders, the young man must necessarily have retained a deep-dyed immorality from his former pursuits; and then, even during this past year, he had drawn upon his capital both to dazzle the parents and to attract the daughter. This not unpardonable vanity gave the finishing touch; the family had a horror of unthrift; and their refusal was final when they heard that Godefroid had sacrificed in six years a hundred and fifty thousand francs of his capital.

The blow fell all the harder on his aching heart because the girl was not at all good-looking. Still, under his mother's influence, Godefroid had credited the object of his addresses with a sterling character and the superior advantages of a sound judgment; he was accustomed to her face, he had studied its expression, he liked the young lady's voice, manners, and look. Thus, after staking the last hope of his life on this attachment, he felt the bitterest despair.

His mother dying, he found himself—he whose requirements had always followed the tide of fashion—with five thousand francs for his whole fortune, and the certainty of never being able to repair any future loss, since he saw himself incapable of the energy which is imperatively demanded for the grim task of *making a fortune*.

But a man who is weak, aggrieved, and irritable cannot submit to be extinguished at a blow. While still in mourning, Godefroid wandered through Paris in search of something to "turn up"; he dined in public rooms, he rashly



introduced himself to strangers, he mingled in society, and met with nothing but opportunities for expenditure. As he wandered about the boulevards, he was so miserable that the sight of a mother with a young daughter to marry gave him as keen a pang as that of a young man going on horseback to the Bois, of a parvenu in a smart carriage, or of an official with a ribbon in his buttonhole. The sense of his own inadequacy told him that he could not pretend even to the more respectable of second-class positions, nor to the easiest form of office-work. And he had spirit enough to be constantly vexed, and sense enough to bewail himself in bitter self-accusation.

Incapable of contending with life, conscious of certain superior gifts, but devoid of the will that brings them into play, feeling himself incomplete, lacking force to undertake any great work, or to resist the temptations of those tastes he had acquired from education or recklessness in his past life, he was a victim to three maladies, any one of them enough to disgust a man with life when he has ceased to exercise his religious faith. Indeed, Godefroid wore the expression so common now among men that it has become the Parisian type: it bears the stamp of disappointed or smothered ambitions, of mental distress, of hatred lulled by the apathy of a life amply filled up by the superficial and daily spectacle of Paris, of satiety seeking stimulants, of repining without talent, of the affectation of force; the venom of past failure which makes a man smile at scoffing, and scorn all that is elevating, misprize the most necessary authorities, enjoy their dilemmas, and disdain all social forms.

This Parisian disease is to the active and persistent coalition of energetic malcontents what the soft wood is to the sap of a tree; it preserves it, covers it, and hides it.

Wearied of himself, Godefroid one morning resolved to give himself some reason for living. He had met a former schoolfellow, who had proved to be the tortoise of the fable

while he himself had been the hare. In the course of such a conversation as is natural to old companions while walking in the sunshine on the Boulevard des Italiens, he was amazed to find that success had attended this man, who, apparently far less gifted than himself with talent and fortune, had simply resolved each day to do as he had resolved the day before. The brain-sick man determined to imitate this simplicity of purpose.

"Life in the world is like the earth," his friend had said; "it yields in proportion to our labors."

Godefroid was in debt. As his first penance, his first duty, he required himself to live in seclusion and pay his debts out of his income. For a man who was in the habit of spending six thousand francs when he had five, it was no light thing to reduce his expenses to two thousand francs. He read the advertisement-sheets every morning, hoping to find a place of refuge where he might live on a fixed sum, and where he might enjoy the solitude necessary to a man who wanted to study and examine himself, and discern a vocation. The manners and customs of the boarding-houses in the Quartier Latin were an offence to his taste; a private asylum, he thought, would be unhealthy; and he was fast drifting back into the fatal uncertainty of a will-less man, when the following advertisement caught his eye:

"Small apartments, at seventy francs a month; might suit a clerk in orders. Quiet habits expected. Board included; and the rooms will be inexpensively furnished on mutual agreement. Inquire of M. Millet, grocer, Rue Chanoinesse, by Notre-Dame, for all further particulars."

Attracted by the artless style of this paragraph, and the aroma of simplicity it seemed to bear, Godefroid presented himself at the grocer's shop at about four in the afternoon, and was told that at that hour Madame de la Chanterie was dining, and could see no one at meal-times. The lady would be visible in the evening after seven, or between ten and twelve in the morning. While he talked, Mon-

sieur Millet took stock of Godefroid, and proceeded to put him through his first examination—"Was Monsieur single? Madame wished for a lodger of regular habits. The house was locked up by eleven at latest."

"Well," said he in conclusion, "you seem to me, Monsieur, to be of an age to suit Madame de la Chanterie's views."

"What age do you suppose I am?" asked Godefroid.

"Somewhere about forty," replied the grocer.

This plain answer cast Godefroid into the depths of misanthropy and dejection. He went to dine on the Quai de la Tournelle, and returned to gaze at Notre-Dame just as the fires of the setting sun were rippling and breaking in wavelets on the buttresses of the great nave. The quay was already in shadow, while the towers still glittered in the glow, and the contrast struck Godefroid as he tasted all the bitterness which the grocer's brutal simplicity had stirred within him.

Thus the young man was oscillating between the whisperings of despair and the appealing tones of religious harmony aroused in his mind by the Cathedral bells, when, in the darkness, and silence, and calm moonshine, the priest's speech fell on his ear. Though far from devout—like most men of the century—his feelings were touched by these words, and he went back to the Rue Chanoinesse, where he had but just decided not to go.

The priest and Godefroid were equally surprised on turning into the Rue Massillon, opposite the north door of the Cathedral, at the spot where it ends by the Rue de la Colombe, and is called Rue des Marmousets. When Godefroid stopped under the arched doorway of the house where Madame de la Chanterie lived, the priest turned round to examine him by the light of a hanging oil-lamp, which will, very likely, be one of the last to disappear in the heart of old Paris.

"Do you wish to see Madame de la Chanterie, Monsieur?" asked the priest.



"Yes," replied Godefroid. "The words I have just heard you utter to that workman prove to me that this house, if you dwell in it, must be good for the soul."

"Then you witnessed my failure," said the priest, lifting the knocker, "for I did not succeed."

"It seems to me that it was the workman who failed. He had begged sturdily enough for money."

"Alas!" said the priest, "one of the greatest misfortunes attending revolutions in France is that each, in its turn, offers a fresh premium to the ambitions of the lower classes. To rise above his status and make a fortune, which, in these days, is considered the social guarantee, the workman throws himself into monstrous plots, which, if they fail, must bring those who dabble in them before the bar of human justice. This is what good-nature sometimes ends in."

The porter now opened a heavy gate, and the priest said to Godefroid—

"Then you have come about the rooms to let?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

The priest and Godefroid then crossed a fairly wide courtyard, beyond which stood the black mass of a tall house, flanked by a square tower even higher than the roof, and amazingly old. Those who know the history of Paris are aware that the soil has risen so much round the Cathedral that there is not a trace to be seen of the twelve steps which originally led up to it. Hence what was the ground floor of this house must now form the cellars. There is a short flight of outer steps to the door of the tower, and inside it an ancient *Vise* or stairs, winding in a spiral round a newel carved to imitate a vine-stock. This style, resembling that of the Louis XII. staircases at Blois, dates as far back as the fourteenth century.

Struck by these various signs of antiquity, Godefroid could not help exclaiming—

"This tower was not built yesterday!"

"It is said to have withstood the attacks of the Normans and to have formed part of a primeval palace of the kings

of Paris; but according to more probable traditions, it was the residence of Fulbert, the famous Canon, and the uncle of Héloïse."

As he spoke the priest opened the door of the apartment, which seemed to be the ground floor, and which, in fact, is now but just above the ground of both the outer and the inner courtyard—for there is a small second court.

In the first room a servant sat knitting by the light of a small lamp; she wore a cap devoid of any ornament but its gauffered cambric frills. She stuck one of the needles through her hair, but did not lay down her knitting as she rose to open the door of a drawing-room looking out on the inner court. This room was lighted up. The woman's dress suggested to Godefroid that of some Gray Sisters.

"Madame, I have found you a tenant," said the priest, showing in Godefroid, who saw in the room three men, sitting in armchairs near Madame de la Chanterie.

The three gentlemen rose; the mistress of the house also; and when the priest had pushed forward a chair for the stranger, and he had sat down in obedience to a sign from Madame de la Chanterie and an old-fashioned bidding to "Be seated," the Parisian felt as if he were far indeed from Paris, in remote Brittany, or the backwoods of Canada.

There are, perhaps, degrees of silence. Godefroid, struck already by the tranquillity of the Rue Massillon and Rue Chanoinesse, where a vehicle passes perhaps twice in a month, struck too by the stillness of the courtyard and the tower, may have felt himself at the very heart of silence, in this drawing-room, hedged round by so many old streets, old courtyards, and old walls.

This part of the Island, called the Cloister, preserves the character common to all cloisters; it is damp, and cold, and monastic; silence reigns there unbroken, even during the noisiest hours of the day. It may also be remarked that this part of the Cité, lying between the body of the Cathedral and the river, is to the north and under the shadow of Notre-Dame. The east wind loses itself there, unchecked

by any obstacle, and the fogs from the Seine are to some extent entrapped by the blackened walls of the ancient metropolitan church.

So no one will be surprised at the feeling that came over Godefroid on finding himself in this ancient abode, and in the presence of four persons as silent and as solemn as every thing around them. He did not look about him; his curiosity centred in Madame de la Chanterie, whose name even had already puzzled him.

This lady was evidently a survival from another century, not to say another world. She had a rather sweet face, with a soft, coldly-colored complexion, an aquiline nose, a benign brow, hazel eyes, and a double chin, the whole framed in curls of silver hair. Her dress could only be described by the old name of *fourreau* (literally a sheath, a tightly-fitting dress), so literally was she cased in it, in the fashion of the eighteenth century. The material—silk of carmelite gray, finely and closely striped with green—seemed to have come down from the same date; the body, cut low, was hidden under a mantilla of richer silk, flounced with black lace, and fastened at the bosom with a brooch containing a miniature. Her feet, shod in black velvet boots, rested on a little stool. Madame de la Chanterie, like her maidservant, was knitting stockings, and had a knitting pin stuck through her waving hair under her lace cap.

"Have you seen Monsieur Millet?" she asked Godefroid in the head voice peculiar to dowagers of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, as if to invite him to speak, seeing that he was almost thunderstruck.

"Yes, Madame."

"I am afraid the rooms will hardly suit you," she went on, observing that her proposed tenant was dressed with elegance in clothes that were new and smart.

Godefroid, in fact, was wearing patent leather boots, yellow gloves, handsome shirt-studs, and a neat watch chain passed through the buttonhole of a black silk waistcoat sprigged with blue.



Madame de la Chanterie took a small silver whistle out of her pocket and blew it. The woman-servant came in.

"Manon, child, show this gentleman the rooms. Will you, my dear friend, accompany him?" she said to the priest. "And if by any chance the rooms should suit you," she added, rising and looking at Godefroid, "we will afterward discuss the terms."

Godefroid bowed and went out. He heard the iron rattle of a bunch of keys which Manon took out of a drawer, and saw her light a candle in a large brass candlestick.

Manon led the way without speaking a word. When he found himself on the stairs again, climbing to the upper floors, he doubted the reality of things; he felt dreaming though awake, and saw the whole world of fantastic romance such as he had read of in his hours of idleness. And any Parisian dropped here, as he was, out of the modern city, with its luxurious houses and furniture, its glittering restaurants and theatres, and all the stirring heart of Paris, would have felt as he did. The single candle carried by the servant lighted the winding stair but dimly; spiders had hung it with their dusty webs.

Manon's dress consisted of a skirt broadly plaited and made of coarse woollen stuff; the bodice was cut square at the neck, behind and before, and all her clothes seemed to move in a piece. Having reached the second floor, which had been the third, Manon stopped, turned the springs of an antique lock, and opened a door painted in coarse imitation of knotted mahogany.

"There!" said she, leading the way.

Who had lived in these rooms? A miser, an artist who had died of want, a cynic indifferent to the world, or a pious man who was alien to it? Any one of the four seemed possible, as the visitor smelled the very odor of poverty, saw the greasy stains on wall-papers covered with a layer of smoke, the blackened ceilings, the windows with their small dusty panes, the brown-tiled floor, the wainscot sticky with a deposit of fog. A damp chill came down the fireplaces,

faced with carved stonework that had been painted, and with mirrors framed in the seventeenth century. The rooms were at the angle of a square, as the house stood, inclosing the inner courtyard, but this Godefroid could not see, as it was dark.

"Who used to live here?" Godefroid asked of the priest.

"A Councillor to the Parlement, Madame's granduncle, a Monsieur de Boisfrelon. He had been quite childish ever since the Revolution, and died in 1832 at the age of ninety-six; Madame could not bear the idea of seeing a stranger in the rooms so soon; still, she cannot endure the loss of rent. . . ."

"Oh, and Madame will have the place cleaned and furnished, to be all Monsieur could wish," added Manon.

"It will only depend on how you wish to arrange the rooms," said the priest. "They can be made into a nice sitting-room and a large bedroom and dressing-room, and the two small rooms round the corner are large enough for a spacious study. That is how my rooms are arranged below this, and those on the next floor."

"Yes," said Manon; "Monsieur Alain's rooms are just like these, only that they look out on the tower."

"I think I had better see the rooms again by daylight," said Godefroid shyly.

"Perhaps so," said Manon.

The priest and Godefroid went downstairs again, leaving Manon to lock up, and she then followed to light them down. Then, when he was in the drawing-room, Godefroid, having recovered himself, could, while talking to Madame de la Chanterie, study the place, the personages, and the surroundings.

The window-curtains of this drawing-room were of old red satin; there was a cornice-valance, and the curtains were looped with silk cord; the red tiles of the floor showed beyond an ancient tapestry carpet that was too small to cover it entirely. The woodwork was painted stone-color. The ceiling, divided down the middle by a joist starting from the

chimney, looked like an addition lately conceded to modern luxury; the easy-chairs were of wood painted white, with tapestry seats. A shabby clock, standing between two gilt candlesticks, adorned the chimney-shelf. An old table with stag's feet stood by Madame de la Chanterie, and on it were her balls of wool in a wicker basket. A clockwork lamp threw light on the picture.

The three men, sitting as rigid, motionless, and speechless as Bonzes, had, like Madame de la Chanterie, evidently ceased speaking on hearing the stranger return. Their faces were perfectly cold and reserved, as befitted the room, the house, and the neighborhood.

Madame de la Chanterie agreed that Godefroid's observations were just, and said that she had postponed doing anything till she was informed of the intentions of her lodger, or rather of her boarder; for if the lodger could conform to the ways of the household, he was to board with them—but their ways were so unlike those of Paris life! Here, in the Rue Chanoinesse, they kept country hours; every one, as a rule, had to be in by ten at night; noise was not to be endured; neither women nor children were admitted, so that their regular habits might not be interfered with. No one, perhaps, but a priest could agree to such a rule. At any rate, Madame de la Chanterie wished for some one who liked plain living and had few requirements; she could only afford the most necessary furniture in the rooms. Monsieur Alain was satisfied, however—and she bowed to one of the gentlemen—and she would do the same for the new lodger as for the old.

"But," said the priest, "I do not think that Monsieur is quite inclined to come and join us in our convent."

"Indeed; why not?" said Monsieur Alain. "We are all quite content, and we all get on very well."

"Madame," said Godefroid, rising, "I will have the honor of calling on you again to-morrow."

Though he was but a young man, the four old gentlemen and Madame de la Chanterie stood up, and the priest



escorted him to the outer steps. A whistle sounded, and at the signal the porter appeared, lantern in hand, to conduct Godefroid to the street; then he closed the yellow gate, as heavy as that of a prison, and covered with arabesque iron-work, so old that it would be hard to determine its date.

When Godefroid found himself sitting in a hackney cab and being carried to the living regions of Paris, where light and warmth reigned, all he had just seen seemed like a dream; and as he walked along the Boulevard des Italiens, his impressions already seemed as remote as a memory. He could not help saying to himself—

“Shall I find those people there to-morrow, I wonder?”

On the following day, when he woke in the midst of the elegance of modern luxury and the refinements of English comfort, Godefroid recalled all the details of his visit to the Cloister of Notre-Dame, and came to some conclusions in his mind as to the things he had seen there. The three gentlemen, whose appearance, attitude, and silence had left an impression on him, were no doubt boarders, as well as the priest. Madame de la Chanterie's gravity seemed to him to be the result of the reserved dignity with which she had endured some great sorrows. And yet, in spite of the explanations he gave himself, Godefroid could not help feeling that there was an air of mystery in these uncommunicative faces. He cast a glance at his furniture to choose what he could keep, what he thought indispensable; but, transporting them in fancy to the horrible rooms in the Rue Chanoinesse, he could not help laughing at the grotesque contrast they would make there, and determined to sell everything, and pay away so much as they might bring; leaving the furnishing of the rooms to Madame de la Chanterie. He longed for a new life, and the objects that could recall his old existence must be bad for him. In his craving for transformation—for his was one of those natures which rush forward at once with a bound, instead of approaching a situation step by step as others do—he was seized, as he

sat at breakfast, by an idea: he would realize his fortune, pay his debts, and place the surplus with the banking firm his father had done business with.

This banking house was that of Mongenod and Co., established in Paris since 1816 or 1817, a firm whose reputation had never been blown on in the midst of the commercial depravity which at this time had blighted, more or less, several great Paris houses. Thus, in spite of their immense wealth, the houses of Nucingen and du Tillet, of Keller Brothers, of Palma and Co., suffer under a secret disesteem whispered, as it were, between lip and ear. Hideous transactions had led to such splendid results; and political successes, nay, monarchical principles, had overgrown such foul beginnings that no one in 1834 thought for a moment of the mud in which the roots were set of such majestic trees—the upholders of the State. At the same time, there was not one of these bankers that did not feel aggrieved by praises of the House of Mongenod.

The Mongenods, following the example of English bankers, make no display of wealth; they do everything quite quietly, and carry on their business with such prudence, shrewdness, and honesty as allow them to operate with certainty from one end of the world to the other.

The present head of the house, Frédéric Mongenod, is brother-in-law to the Vicomte de Fontaine. Thus his numerous family is connected, through the Baron de Fontaine, with Monsieur Grossetete, the Receiver-General (brother to the Grossetete and Co. of Limoges), with the Vandenesses, and with Planat de Baudry, another Receiver-General. This relationship, after being of the greatest service to the late Mongenod senior in his financial operations at the time of the Restoration, had gained him the confidence of many of the old nobility, whose capital and vast savings were intrusted to his bank. Far from aiming at the peerage, like Keller, Nucingen, and du Tillet, the Mongenods kept out of political life, and knew no more of it than was needed for banking business.

Mongenod's bank occupies a magnificent house in the Rue de la Victoire, with a garden behind and a courtyard in front, where Madame Mongenod resided with her two sons, with whom she was in partnership. Madame la Vicomtesse de Fontaine had taken out her share on the death of the elder Mongenod in 1827. Frédéric Mongenod, a handsome fellow of about five-and-thirty, with a cold manner, as silent and reserved as a Genevese, and as neat as an Englishman, had acquired under his father all the qualifications needed in his difficult business. He was more cultivated than most bankers, for his education had given him the general knowledge which forms the curriculum of the Ecole Polytechnique; and, like many bankers, he had an occupation, a taste, outside his regular business, a love of physics and chemistry. Mongenod junior, ten years younger than Frédéric, filled the place, under his elder brother, that a head-clerk holds under a lawyer or a notary; Frédéric was training him, as he himself had been trained by his father, in the scientific side of banking; for a banker is to money what a writer is to ideas—they both ought to know everything.

Godefroid, as he mentioned his family name, could see how highly his father had been respected, for he was shown through the offices at once to that next to Mongenod's private room. This room was shut in by glass doors, so that, in spite of his wish not to listen, Godefroid overheard the conversation going on within.

"Madame, your account shows sixteen hundred thousand francs on both sides of the balance sheet," Mongenod the younger was saying. "I know not what my brother's views may be; he alone can decide whether an advance of a hundred thousand francs is possible. You lacked prudence. It is not wise to put sixteen hundred thousand francs into a business—"

"Too loud, Louis!" said a woman's voice. "Your brother's advice is never to speak but in an undertone. There may be some one in the little waiting-room."

At this instant Frédéric Mongenod opened the door from



his living rooms to his private office; he saw Godefroid, and went through to the inner room, where he bowed respectfully to the lady who was talking to his brother.

He showed Godefroid in first, saying as he did so, "And whom have I the honor of addressing?"

As soon as Godefroid had announced himself, Frédéric offered him a chair; and while the banker was opening his desk, Louis Mongenod and the lady, who was none else than Madame de la Chanterie, rose and went up to Frédéric. Then they all three went into a window recess, where they stood talking to Madame Mongenod, who was in all the secrets of the business. For thirty years past this clever woman had given ample proofs of her capacity, to her husband first, now to her sons, and she was, in fact, an active partner in the house, signing for it as they did. Godefroid saw in a pigeon-hole a number of boxes labelled "La Chanterie," and numbered 1 to 7.

When the conference was ended by a word from the Senior to his brother, "Well, then, go to the cashier," Madame de la Chanterie turned round, saw Godefroid, restrained a start of surprise, and then asked a few whispered questions of Mongenod, who replied briefly, also in a low voice.

Madame de la Chanterie wore thin prunella shoes and gray silk stockings; she had on the same dress as before, and was wrapped in the Venetian cloak that was just coming into fashion again. Her drawn bonnet of green silk, *a la bonne femme*, was lined with white, and her face was framed in flowing lace. She stood very erect, in an attitude which bore witness, if not to high birth, at any rate to aristocratic habits. But for her extreme affability, she would perhaps have seemed proud. In short, she was very imposing.

"It is not so much good luck as a dispensation of Providence that has brought us together here, Monsieur," said she to Godefroid. "I was on the point of declining a boarder whose habits, as I fancied, were ill suited to those of my household; but Monsieur Mongenod has just given me some information as to your family which is—"

"Indeed, Madame—Monsieur—" said Godefroid, addressing the lady and the banker together, "I have no longer any family, and I came to ask advice of my late father's banker to arrange my affairs in accordance with a new plan of life."

Godefroid told his story in a few words, and expressed his desire of leading a new life.

"Formerly," said he, "a man in my position would have turned monk; but there are now no religious Orders—"

"Go to live with Madame, if she will accept you as a boarder," said Frédéric Mongenod, after exchanging glances with Madame de la Chanterie, "and do not sell your investments; leave them in my hands. Give me the schedule of your debts; I will fix dates of payment with your creditors, and you can draw for your own use a hundred and fifty francs a month. It will take about two years to pay everything off. During those two years, in the home you are going to, you will have ample leisure to think of a career, especially as the people you will be living with can give you good advice."

Louis Mongenod came back with a hundred thousand-franc notes, which he gave to Madame de la Chanterie. Godefroid offered his arm to his future landlady, and took her to her hackney-coach.

"Then we shall meet again presently," said she in a kind tone.

"At what hour shall you be at home, Madame?" said Godefroid.

"In two hours' time."

"I have time to get rid of my furniture," said he, with a bow.

During the few minutes while Madame de la Chanterie's arm had lain on his as they walked side by side, Godefroid could not see beyond the halo cast about this woman by the words, "Your account stands at sixteen hundred thousand francs," spoken by Louis Mongenod to a lady who buried her life in the depths of the Cloître de Notre-Dame.

This idea, "She must be rich!" had entirely changed his view of things. "How old is she, I wonder?"

And he had a vision of a romance in his residence in the Rue Chanoinesse.

"She looks like an aristocrat; does she dabble in banking affairs?" he asked himself.

And in our day nine hundred and ninety-nine men out of a thousand would have thought of the possibility of marrying this woman.

A furniture dealer, who was also a decorator, but chiefly an agent for furnished flats, gave about three thousand francs for all that Godefroid wished to dispose of, leaving the things in his rooms for the few days needed to clean and arrange the dreadful rooms in the Rue Chanoinesse.

Thither the brain-sick youth at once repaired; he called in a painter, recommended by Madame de la Chanterie, who undertook for a moderate sum to whitewash the ceilings, clean the windows, paint the wainscoting like gray maple, and color the floors, within a week. Godefroid measured the rooms to carpet them all alike with green drugget of the cheapest description. He wished everything to be uniform and as simple as possible in his cell.

Madame de la Chanterie approved of this. With Mannon's assistance she calculated how much white dimity would be needed for the window curtains and for a simple iron bedstead; then she undertook to procure the stuff and to have them made for a price so small as to amaze Godefroid. With the new furniture he would send in, his apartments would not cost him more than six hundred francs.

"So I can take about a thousand to Monsieur Mongenod."

"We here lead a Christian life," said Madame de la Chanterie, "which is, as you know, quite out of keeping with much superfluity, and I fear you still preserve too many."

As she gave her new boarder this piece of advice, she glanced at the diamond that sparkled in a ring through which the ends of Godefroid's blue necktie were drawn.



"I only mention this," she added, "because I perceive that you are preparing to break with the dissipated life of which you spoke with regret to Monsieur Mongenod."

Godefroid gazed at Madame de la Chanterie, listening with delight to the harmony of her clear voice; he studied her face, which was perfectly colorless, worthy to be that of one of the grave cold Dutch women so faithfully depicted by the painters of the Flemish school, faces on which a wrinkle would be impossible.

"Plump and fair!" thought he, as he went away. "Still, her hair is white—"

Godefroid, like all weak natures, had readily accustomed himself to the idea of a new life, believing it would be perfect happiness, and he was eager to settle in the Rue Chanoinesse; nevertheless, he had a gleam of prudence—or, if you like, of suspicion. Two days before moving in he went again to Monsieur Mongenod to ask for further information concerning the household he was going to join. During the few minutes he had spent now and then in his future home, to see what alterations were being made, he had observed the going and coming of several persons whose appearance and manner, without any air of mystery, suggested that they were busied in the practice of some profession, some secret occupation with the residents in the house. At this time many plots were afoot to help the elder branch of Bourbons to remount the throne, and Godefroid believed there was some conspiracy here.

But when he found himself in the banker's private room and under his searching eye, he was ashamed of himself as he formulated his question and saw a sardonic smile on Frédéric Mongenod's lips.

"Madame la Baronne de la Chanterie," he replied, "is one of the obscurest but one of the most honorable women in Paris. Have you any particular reason for asking for information?"

Godefroid fell back on flat excuses—he was arranging to live a long time with these strangers, and it was as well to

know to whom he was tying himself, and the like. But the banker's smile only became more and more ironical, and Godefroid more and more ashamed, till he blushed at the step he had taken, and got nothing by it; for he dared ask no more questions about Madame de la Chanterie or his fellow-boarders.

Two days later, after dining for the last time at the Café Anglais, and seeing the first two pieces at the Variétés, at ten o'clock on a Monday night he came to sleep in the Rue Chanoinesse, where Manon lighted him to his room.

Solitude has a charm somewhat akin to that of the wild life of savages, which no European ever gives up after having once tasted it. This may seem strange in an age when every one lives so completely in the sight of others that everybody is inquisitive about everybody else, and that privacy will soon have ceased to exist, so quickly do the eyes of the Press—the modern Argus—increase in boldness and intrusiveness; and yet the statement is supported by the evidence of the first six Christian centuries, when no recluse ever came back to social life again. There are few mental wounds that solitude cannot cure. Thus, in the first instance, Godefroid was struck by the calm and stillness of his new abode, exactly as a tired traveller finds rest in a bath.

On the day after his arrival as a boarder with Madame de la Chanterie, he could not help cross-examining himself on finding himself thus cut off from everything, even from Paris, though he was still under the shadow of its Cathedral. Here, stripped of every social vanity, there would henceforth be no witnesses to his deeds but his conscience and his fellow-boarders. This was leaving the beaten highroad of the world for an unknown track; and whither would the track lead him? To what occupation would he find himself committed?

He had been lost in such reflections for a couple of hours, when Manon, the only servant of the establishment:

knocked at his door and told him that the second breakfast was served; they were waiting for him. Twelve was striking.

The new boarder went downstairs at once, prompted by his curiosity to see the five persons with whom he was thenceforth to live. On entering the drawing-room, he found all the residents in the house standing up and dressed precisely as they had been on the day when he had first come to make inquiries.

"Did you sleep well?" asked Madame de la Chanterie.

"I did not wake till ten o'clock," said Godefroid, bowing to the four gentlemen, who returned the civility with much gravity.

"We quite expected it," said the old man, known as Monsieur Alain, and he smiled.

"Manon spoke of the second breakfast," Godefroid went on. "I have, I fear, already broken one of your rules without intending it.—At what hour do you rise?"

"We do not get up quite by the rule of the monks of old," replied Madame de la Chanterie graciously, "but, like workmen, at six in winter and at half-past three in summer. We also go to bed by the rule of the sun; we are always asleep by nine in winter, by half-past eleven in summer. We drink some milk, which is brought from our own farm, after prayers, all but Monsieur l'Abbé de Vèze, who performs early Mass at Notre-Dame—at six in summer, at seven in winter—and these gentlemen as well as I, your humble servant, attend that service every day."

Madame de la Chanterie finished this speech at table, where her five guests were now seated.

The dining-room, painted gray throughout, and decorated with carved wood of a design showing the taste of Louis XIV., opened out of the sort of anteroom where Manon sat, and ran parallel with Madame de la Chanterie's room, adjoining the drawing-room, no doubt. There was no ornament but an old clock. The furniture consisted of six chairs, their oval backs upholstered with worsted-work



evidently done by Madame de la Chanterie, of two mahogany sideboards, and a table to match, on which Manon placed the breakfast without spreading a cloth. The breakfast, of monastic frugality, consisted of a small turbot with white sauce, potatoes, a salad, and four dishes of fruit: peaches, grapes, strawberries, and green almonds: then, by way of *hors d'œuvre*, there was honey served in the comb as in Switzerland, besides butter, radishes, cucumber, and sardines. The meal was served in china sprigged with small blue cornflowers and green leaves, a pattern which was no doubt luxuriously fashionable in the time of Louis XVI., but which the increasing demands of the present day have made common.

"It is a fast day!" observed Monsieur Alain. "Since we go to Mass every morning, you may suppose that we yield blindly to all the practices of the Church, even the strictest."

"And you will begin by following our example," added Madame de la Chanterie, with a side-glance at Godefroid, whom she had placed by her side.

Of the four boarders, Godefroid already knew the names of the Abbé de Vèze and Monsieur Alain; but he yet had to learn those of the other two gentlemen. They sat in silence, eating with the absorbed attention that the pious seem to devote to the smallest details of their meals.

"And does this fine fruit also come from your farm, Madame?" Godefroid inquired.

"Yes, Monsieur," she replied. "We have our little model farm, just as the Government has; it is our country house, about three leagues from hence, on the road to Italy, near Villeneuve-Saint-Georges."

"It is a little estate that belongs to us all, and will be the property of the last survivor," said the worthy Monsieur Alain.

"Oh, it is quite inconsiderable," added Madame de la Chanterie, who seemed afraid lest Godefroid should regard this speech as a bait.

"There are thirty acres of arable land," said one of the men unknown to Godefroid, "six acres of meadow, and an inclosure of about four acres of garden, in the midst of which our house stands; in front of it is the farm."

"But such an estate must be worth above a hundred thousand francs," observed Godefroid.

"Oh, we get nothing out of it but our produce," replied the same speaker.

He was a tall man, thin and grave. At a first glance he seemed to have served in the army; his white hair showed that he was past sixty, and his face revealed great sorrows and religious resignation.

The second stranger, who appeared to be a sort of compound of a master of rhetoric and a man of business, was of middle height, stout but active, and his face bore traces of a joviality peculiar to the notaries and attorneys of Paris.

The dress of all four men was marked by the extreme neatness due to personal care; and Manon's hand was visible in the smallest details of their raiment. Their coats were perhaps ten years old, and preserved, as a priest's clothes are preserved, by the occult powers of a house-keeper and by constant use. These men wore, as it were, the livery of a system of life; they were all the slaves of the same thought, their looks spoke the same word, their faces wore an expression of gentle resignation, of inviting tranquillity.

"Am I indiscreet, Madame," said Godefroid, "to ask the names of these gentlemen? I am quite prepared to tell them all about myself; may I not know as much about them as circumstances allow?"

"This," said Madame de la Chanterie, introducing the tall, thin man, "is Monsieur Nicolas; he is a retired Colonel of the Gendarmerie, ranking as a Major-General.—And this gentleman," she went on, turning to the little stout man, "was formerly Councillor to the Bench of the King's Court in Paris; he retired from his functions in August, 1830; his name is Monsieur Joseph. Though you joined us but yes-

terday, I may tell you that in the world Monsieur Nicolas bore the name of Marquis de Montauran, and Monsieur Joseph that of Lecamus, Baron de Tresnes; but to us, as to the outer world, these names no longer exist. These gentlemen have no heirs; they have anticipated the oblivion that must fall on their families; they are simply Monsieur Nicolas and Monsieur Joseph, as you will be simply Monsieur Godefroid."

As he heard these two names—one so famous in the history of Royalism from the disaster which put an end to the rising of the Chouans at the beginning of the Consulate, the other so long respected in the records of the old "Parlement"—Godefroid could not repress a start of surprise; but when he looked at these survivors from the wreck of the two greatest institutions of the fallen monarchy, he could not detect the slightest movement of feature or change of countenance that betrayed a worldly emotion. These two men did not or would not remember what they once had been. This was Godefroid's first lesson.

"Each name, gentlemen, is a chapter of history," said he respectfully.

"The history of our own time," said Monsieur Joseph, "of mere ruins."

"You are in good company," said Monsieur Alain, smiling.

He can be described in two words: he was a middle-class Paris citizen; a worthy man with the face of a calf, dignified by white hairs, but insipid with its eternal smile.

As to the priest, the Abbé de Vèze, his position was all-sufficient. The priest who fulfils his mission is recognizable at the first glance when his eyes meet yours.

What chiefly struck Godefroid from the first was the profound respect shown by the boarders to Madame de la Chanterie; all of them, even the priest, notwithstanding the sacred dignity conferred by his functions, behaved to her as to a queen. He also noted the temperance of each guest; they ate solely for the sake of nourishment. Madame de la



Chanterie, like the rest, took but a single peach and half a bunch of grapes; but she begged the new-comer not to restrict himself in the same way, offering him every dish in turn.

Godefroid's curiosity was excited to the highest pitch by this beginning. After the meal they returned to the drawing-room, where he was left to himself; Madame de la Chanterie and her four friends held a little privy council in a window recess. This conference, in which no animation was displayed, lasted for about half an hour. They talked in undertones, exchanging remarks which each seemed to have thought out beforehand. Now and again Monsieur Alain and Monsieur Joseph consulted their pocketbooks, turning over the leaves.

"You will see to the Faubourg," said Madame de la Chanterie to Monsieur Nicolas, who went away.

These were the first words Godefroid could overhear.

"And you to the Quartier Saint-Marceau," she went on, addressing Monsieur Joseph.

"Will you take the Faubourg Saint-Germain and try to find what we need?" she added to the Abbé de Vèze, who at once went off.—"And you, my dear Alain," she added with a smile, "look into matters.—To-day's business is all settled," said she, returning to Godefroid.

She sat down in her armchair, and took from a little work-table some under-linen ready cut out, on which she began to sew as if working against time.

Godefroid, lost in conjectures, and seeing in all this a Royalist conspiracy, took the lady's speech as introductory, and, seating himself by her side, watched her closely. He was struck by her singular skill in stitching; while everything about her proclaimed the great lady, she had the peculiar deftness of a paid seamstress; for every one can distinguish, by certain tricks of working, the habits of a professional from those of an amateur.

"You sew," said Godefroid, "as if you were used to the business."

"Alas!" she said, without looking up, "I have done it ere now from necessity—"

Two large tears rose to the old woman's eyes, and rolled down her cheeks on to the work she held.

"Pray, forgive me, Madame!" cried Godefroid.

Madame de la Chanterie looked at her new inmate, and saw on his features such an expression of regret that she nodded to him kindly. Then, after wiping her eyes, she recovered the composure that characterized her face, which was not so much cold as chilled.

"You here find yourself, Monsieur Godefroid—for, as you know already, you will be called only by your Christian name—amid the wreckage from a great storm. We have all been stricken and wounded to the heart through family interests or damaged fortunes, by the forty years' hurricane that overthrew royalty and religion, and scattered to the winds the elements that constituted France as it was of old. Words which seem but trivial bear a sting for us, and that is the reason of the silence that reigns here. We rarely speak of ourselves; we have forgotten what we were, and have found means of substituting a new life for the old life. It was because I fancied, from your revelation to the Mongenods, that there was some resemblance between your situation and our own that I persuaded my four friends to receive you among us; in fact, we were anxious to find another recluse for our convent. But what do you propose to do? We do not enter on solitude without some stock of moral purpose."

"Madame, as I hear you speak, I shall be too happy to accept you as the arbiter of my destiny."

"That is speaking like a man of the world," said she. "You are trying to flatter me—a woman of sixty!—My dear boy," she went on, "you are, you must know, among people who believe firmly in God, who have all felt His hand, and who have given themselves up to Him almost as completely as do the Trappists. Have you ever observed the assurance of a true priest when he has given himself to the Lord, when

he hearkens to His voice and strives to be a docile instrument under the fingers of Providence? He has shed all vanity, all self-consciousness, all the feelings which cause constant offences to the worldly; his quiescence is as complete as that of the fatalist, his resignation enables him to endure all things. The true priest—an Abbé de Vèze—is like a child with his mother; for the Church, my dear sir, is a good mother. Well, a man may be a priest without a tonsure; not all priests are in orders. If we devote ourselves to doing good, we imitate the good priest, we obey God!—I am not preaching to you; I do not want to convert you; I am only explaining our life.”

“Instruct me, Madame,” said Godefroid, quite conquered. “I would wish not to fail in any particular of your rules.”

“You would find that too much to do; you will learn by degrees. Above all things, never speak here of your past misfortunes, which are mere child’s play as compared with the terrible catastrophes with which God has stricken those with whom you are now living—”

All the time she spoke, Madame de la Chanterie went on pulling her thread through with distracting regularity; but at this full stop, she raised her head and looked at Godefroid; she saw that he was spellbound by the thrilling sweetness of her voice, which had indeed a sort of apostolic unction. The young sufferer was gazing with admiration at the really extraordinary appearance of this woman, whose face was radiant. A faint flush tinged her wax-white cheeks, her eyes sparkled, a youthful soul gave life to the wrinkles that had acquired sweetness, and everything about her invited affection. Godefroid sat measuring the depth of the gulf that parted this woman from vulgar souls; he saw that she had attained to an inaccessible height, whither religion had guided her; and he was still too much of the world not to be stung to the quick, not to long to go down into that gulf and climb to the sharp peak where Madame de la Chanterie stood, and to stand by her side. While



he gave himself up to a thorough study of this woman, he related to her all the mortifications of his life, all he could not say at Mongenod's, where his self-betrayal had been limited to a statement of his position.

"Poor child!"

This motherly exclamation, dropping from the lips of Madame de la Chanterie, fell, from time to time, like healing balm, on the young man's heart.

"What can I find to take the place of so many hopes deceived, of so much disappointed affection?" said he at last, looking at the lady, who seemed lost in revery. "I came here," he went on, "to reflect and make up my mind. I have lost my mother—will you take her place—"

"But," said she, "will you show me a son's obedience?"

"Yes, if you can show me the tenderness that exacts it."

"Very well; we will try," said she.

Godefroid held out his hand to take that which the lady offered him, and raised it reverently to his lips. Madame de la Chanterie's hands were admirably formed—neither wrinkled, nor fat, nor thin; white enough to move a young woman to envy, and of a shape that a sculptor might copy. Godefroid had admired these hands, thinking them in harmony with the enchantment of her voice and the heavenly blue of her eye.

"Wait here," said Madame de la Chanterie, rising and going into her own room.

Godefroid was deeply agitated, and could not think to what he was to attribute the lady's departure: he was not left long in perplexity, for she returned with a book in her hand.

"Here, my dear boy," said she, "are the prescriptions of a great healer of souls. When the things of every-day life have failed to give us the happiness we looked for, we must seek in a higher life, and here is the key to that new world. Read a chapter of this book morning and evening; but give it your whole attention; study every word as if it were some foreign tongue. By the end of a month you will

be another man. For twenty years now have I read a chapter every day, and my three friends, Nicolas, Alain, and Joseph, would no more omit it than they would miss going to bed and getting up again; imitate them for the love of God—for my sake—" she said, with divine serenity and dignified confidence.

Godefroid turned the book round and read on the back "Imitation of Jesus Christ." The old lady's artlessness and youthful candor, her certainty that she was doing him good, confounded the ex-dandy. Madame de la Chanterie had exactly the manner, the intense satisfaction, of a woman who might offer a hundred thousand francs to a merchant on the verge of bankruptcy.

"I have used this book," she said, "for six-and-twenty years. God grant that its use may prove contagious! Go and buy me another copy, for the hour is at hand when certain persons are coming here who must not be seen."

Godefroid bowed and went up to his rooms, where he tossed the book on to a table, exclaiming—

"Poor, dear woman! There—"

The book, like all that are constantly used, fell open at a particular place. Godefroid sat down to arrange his ideas a little, for he had gone through more agitation that morning than he had in the course of the most stormy two months of his life; his curiosity especially had never been so strongly excited. His eyes wandered mechanically, as happens with men when their minds are absorbed in meditation, and fell on the two pages that lay facing him. He read as follows:

#### "CHAPTER XII

##### *"On the Royal Road of the Holy Cross"*

He picked up the volume, and this paragraph of that grand book captivated his eyes as though by words of fire—

"He has gone before you carrying His cross, and died for you, that you too might have strength to carry your cross, and be willing to die upon the Cross. . . .

"Go where you will, try what you will, you will not find a grander way, or a safer way, than the way of the Holy Cross. Arrange and order all your life as you like or think fit, still you will find that you will always have something to suffer, by your own choice or by necessity; and so you will always find a cross. For either you will have bodily pain to bear, or some trouble of the spirit.

"Sometimes God will leave you to yourself, sometimes you will be vexed by your neighbor, and, what is harder than all, you will often be weary of yourself, and there is no remedy or solace by which you can be delivered or relieved. You will have to bear your trouble as long as God decrees. For He wishes you to learn to suffer trial without consolation, to yield humbly to His will, and to become humbler by means of tribulations."

"What a book!" said Godefroid to himself, as he turned over the pages.

And he came upon these words—

"When you have come to feel all trouble sweet and pleasant for the love of Christ, then indeed you may say that all is well with you; you have made for yourself a heaven on earth."

Irritated by this simplicity, characteristic of strength, and enraged at being vanquished by this book, he shut it; but on the morocco cover he saw this motto, stamped in letters of gold—

"Seek only that which is eternal."

"And have they found it here?" he wondered.

He went out to purchase a handsome copy of the "Imitation of Christ," remembering that Madame de la Chanterie would want to read a chapter that evening. He went downstairs and into the street. For a minute or two he remained standing near the gate, undecided as to which way he would go, and wondering in what street and at what bookseller's he



might find the book he needed; and he then heard the heavy sound of the outer gate shutting.

Two men had just come out of the Hotel de la Chanterie—for the reader, if he has understood the character of the old house, will have recognized it as an ancient family mansion. Manon, when she had called Godefroid to breakfast, had asked him how he had slept the first night at the Hotel de la Chanterie, laughing as she spoke.

Godefroid followed the two men, with no idea of spying on them; and they, taking him for an indifferent passer-by, talked loud enough for him to hear them in those deserted streets. The men turned down the Rue Massillon, along by the side of Notre-Dame, and across the Cathedral Square.

"Well, old man, you see how easy it is to get the coppers out of 'em! You must talk their lingo, that is all."

"But we owe the money."

"Who to?"

"To the lady—"

"I should like to see myself sued for debt by that old image! I would—"

"You would what?—You would pay her, I can tell you."

"You're right there, for if I paid I could get more out of her afterward than I got to-day."

"But wouldn't it be better to take their advice and set up on the square?"

"Get out!"

"Since she said she could find some one to stand security?"

"But we should have to give up life—"

"I am sick of 'life'—it is not life to be always working in the vineyards—"

"No; but didn't the Abbé throw over old Marin the other day. He wouldn't give him a thing."

"Ay, but old Marin wanted to play such a game as no one can win at that has not thousands at his back."

At this moment the two men, who were dressed like working foremen, suddenly doubled, and retraced their

steps to cross the bridge by the Hotel-Dieu to the Place Maubert. Godefroid stood aside; but seeing that he was following them closely, the men exchanged looks of suspicion, and they were evidently vexed at having spoken out so plainly.

Godefroid was indeed all the more interested in the conversation because it reminded him of the scene between the Abbé de Vèze and the workman on the evening of his first call.

"What goes on at Madame de la Chanterie's?" he asked himself once more.

As he thought over this question, he made his way to a bookshop in the Rue Saint-Jacques, and returned home with a very handsome copy of the best edition of "The Imitation" that has been published in France.

As he walked slowly homeward to be punctual to the dinner-hour, he went over in his mind all his experience of the morning, and found his soul singularly refreshed by it. He was possessed indeed by intense curiosity, but that curiosity paled before an indefinable wish; he was attracted by Madame de la Chanterie, he felt a vehement longing to attach himself to her, to devote himself for her, to please her and deserve her praise; in short, he was aware of a Platonic passion; he felt that there was unfathomed greatness in that soul, and that he must learn to know it thoroughly. He was eager to discover the secrets of the life of these pure-minded Catholics. And then, in this little congregation of the Faithful, practical religion was so intimately allied with all that is most majestic in the Frenchwoman, that he resolved to do his utmost to be admitted to the fold. Such a vein of feeling would have been sudden indeed in a man of busy life; but Godefroid, as we have seen, was in the position of a shipwrecked wretch who clings to the most fragile bough, hoping that it may bear him, and his soul was plowed land, ready to receive any seed.

He found the four gentlemen in the drawing-room, and he presented the book to Madame de la Chanterie, saying—

"I would not leave you without a copy for this evening."

"God grant," said she, looking at the splendid volume, "that this may be your last fit of elegance!"

And seeing that the four men had reduced the smallest details of their raiment to what was strictly decent and useful, noticing too that this principle was rigorously carried out in every detail of the house, Godefroid understood the purpose of this reproof so delicately expressed.

"Madame," said he, "the men you benefited this morning are monsters. Without intending it, I overheard what they were saying as they went away, and it was full of the blackest ingratitude."

"The two iron-workers from the Rue Mouffetard," said Madame de la Chanterie to Monsieur Nicolas, "that is your concern—"

"The fish gets off the hook more than once before it is caught," said Monsieur Alain, laughing.

Madame de la Chanterie's entire indifference on hearing of the immediate ingratitude of the men to whom she had certainly given money amazed Godefroid, who became thoughtful.

Monsieur Alain and the old lawyer made the dinner a cheerful meal; but the soldier was constantly grave, sad, and cold; his countenance bore the ineradicable stamp of a bitter sorrow, a perennial grief. Madame de la Chanterie was equally attentive to all. Godefroid felt that he was watched by these men, whose prudence was not less than their piety, and vanity led him to imitate their reserve, so he measured his words carefully.

This first day, indeed, was far more lively than those which came after. Godefroid, finding himself shut out from all serious matters, was obliged, during the early morning and the evening when he was alone in his rooms, to read "The Imitation of Christ," and he finally studied it as we must study a book when we are imprisoned with that one alone. We then feel to the book as we should toward a woman with whom we dwelt in solitude; we must either love



or hate the woman; and in the same way we must enter into the spirit of the author or not read ten lines of his work.

Now it is impossible not to be held captive by "The Imitation," which is to dogma what action is to thought. The Catholic Spirit thrills through it, moves and works in it, struggles in it-hand to hand with the life of man. That book is a trusty friend. It speaks to every passion, to every difficulty, even to the most worldly; it answers every objection, it is more eloquent than any preacher, for it speaks with your own voice—a voice that rises from your own heart and that you hear with your soul. In short, it is the Gospel interpreted and adapted to all times and seasons, controlling every situation. It is strange indeed that the Church should not have canonized Gerson, for the Holy Spirit certainly guided his pen.

To Godefroid the Hotel de la Chanterie contained a woman as well as a book; every day he was more and more bewitched by her. In her he found flowers buried under the snow of many winters; he had glimpses of such a sacred friendship as religion sanctions, as the angels smile on—as bound those five, in fact—and against which no evil could prevail. There is a sentiment superior to all others, an affection of soul for soul which resembles those rare blossoms that grow on the loftiest peaks of the earth. One or two examples are shown us in a century; lovers are sometimes united by it; and it accounts for certain faithful attachments which would be inexplicable by the ordinary laws of the world. In such an attachment there are no disappointments, no differences, no vanities, no rivalries, no contrasts even, so intimately fused are two spiritual natures.

It was this immense and infinite feeling, the outcome of Catholic charity, that Godefroid was beginning to dream of. At times he could not believe in the spectacle before his eyes, and he sought to find reasons for the sublime friendships between these five persons, wondering to find true Catholics, Christians of the most primitive type, in Paris, and in 1836.

A week after entering the house, Godefroid had seen such a number of people come and go, he had overheard fragments of conversation in which such serious matters were discussed, that he understood that the existence of this council of five was full of prodigious activity. He noticed that not one of them slept more than six hours at most. Each of them had, as it were, lived through a first day before they met at the second breakfast. Strangers brought in or carried away sums of money, sometimes rather considerable. Mongenod's cashier came very often, always early in the morning, so that his work in the bank should not be interfered with by this business, which was independent of the regular affairs of the House.

One evening Monsieur Mongenod himself called, and Godefroid observed a touch of filial familiarity in his tone to Monsieur Alain, mingled with the deep respect he showed to him, as to Madame de la Chanterie's three other boarders.

That evening the banker only asked Godefroid the most ordinary questions: Was he comfortable? Did he mean to stay? and so forth, advising him to persevere in his determination.

"There is but one thing wanting to make me happy," said Godefroid.

"And what is that?" said the banker.

"An occupation."

"An occupation!" cried the Abbé de Vèze. "Then you have changed your mind; you came to our retreat in search of rest."

"But without prayer, which gives life to the cloister; without meditation, which peoples the desert, rest becomes a disease," said Monsieur Joseph sententiously.

"Learn bookkeeping," said Mongenod, smiling. "In the course of a few months you may be of great use to my friends here—"

"Oh, with the greatest pleasure," exclaimed Godefroid.

The next day was Sunday. Madame de la Chanterie

desired her boarder to give her his arm and to escort her to High Mass.

"This," she said, "is the only thing I desire to force upon you. Many a time during the week I have been moved to speak to you of your salvation; but I do not think the time has come. You would have plenty to occupy you if you shared our beliefs, for you would also share our labors."

At Mass, Godefroid observed the fervency of Messieurs Nicolas, Joseph, and Alain. Having, during these few days, convinced himself of the superior intellect of these three men, their perspicacity, extensive learning, and lofty spirit, he concluded that, if they could thus abase themselves, the Catholic religion must contain mysteries which had hitherto escaped his ken.

"And, after all," said he to himself, "it is the religion of Bossuet, of Pascal, of Racine, of Saint-Louis, of Louis XVI., of Rafael, Michelangelo, and Ximenes, of Bayard and du Guesclin—and how should such a poor creature as I compare myself with these great brains, statesmen, poets, warriors?—"

Were it not that a great lesson is to be derived from these trivial details, it would be foolish in such times as these to dwell on them; but they are indispensable to the interest of this narrative, which the readers of our day will, indeed, find it hard to believe, beginning as it does by an almost ridiculous incident—the influence exerted by a woman of sixty over a young man who had tried everything and found it wanting.

"You did not pray," said Madame de la Chanterie to Godefroid as they came out of Notre-Dame. "Not for any one, not even for the peace of your mother's soul!"

Godefroid reddened, but said nothing.

"Do me the pleasure," Madame de la Chanterie went on, "to go to your room, and not to come down to the drawing-room for an hour. And for the love of me, meditate on a chapter of the 'Imitation'—the first of the Third



Book, entitled 'ON CHRIST SPEAKING WITHIN THE FAITHFUL SOUL.' "

Godefroid bowed coolly, and went upstairs.

"The Devil take 'em all!" he exclaimed, now really in a rage. "What the deuce do they want of me here? What game are they playing? Pshaw! Every woman, even the veriest bigot, is full of tricks, and if Madame" (the name the boarders gave their hostess) "does not want me downstairs, it is because they are plotting something against me."

With this notion in his head, he tried to look out of his own window into that of the drawing-room, but the plan of the building did not allow of it. Then he went down one flight, but hastily ran up again; for it struck him that in a house where the principal inhabitants held such strict principles, an act of espionage would lead to his immediate dismissal. Now, to lose the esteem of those five persons seemed to him as serious a matter as public dishonor.

He waited about three-quarters of an hour, resolved to take Madame de la Chanterie by surprise, and to go down a little before the time she had named. He intended to excuse himself by a fib, saying that his watch was in fault, and twenty minutes too fast. He went down cautiously, without a sound, and on reaching the drawing-room door opened it suddenly.

He saw a man, still young but already famous, a poet whom he had often met in society, Victor de Vernisset, kneeling on one knee before Madame de la Chanterie and kissing the hem of her gown. The sky falling in splinters as if it were made of crystal, as the ancients believed, would have amazed Godefroid less than this sight. The most shocking ideas besieged his brain, and the reaction was even more terrible when, just as he was about to utter the first sarcasm that rose to his lips, he saw Monsieur Alain standing in a corner, counting thousand-franc notes.

In an instant Vernisset had started to his feet. Good Monsieur Alain stared in astonishment. Madame de la Chanterie flashed a look that petrified Godefroid, for the

doubtful expression in the new boarder's face had not escaped her.

"Monsieur is one of us," she said to the young author, introducing Godefroid.

"You are a happy man, my dear fellow," said Vernisset. "You are saved!—But, Madame," he went on, turning to Madame de la Chanterie, "if all Paris could have seen me, I should be delighted. Nothing can ever pay my debt to you. I am your slave forever! I am yours, body and soul. Command in whatever you will, I will obey; my gratitude knows no bounds. I owe you my life—it is yours."

"Come, come," said the worthy Alain, "do not be rash. Only work; and, above all, never attack religion in your writings.—And remember you are in debt."

He handed him an envelope bulging with the banknotes he had counted out. Victor de Vernisset's eyes filled with tears. He respectfully kissed Madame de la Chanterie's hand, and went away after shaking hands with Monsieur Alain and with Godefroid.

"You did not obey Madame," said the good man solemnly; and his face had an expression of sadness, such as Godefroid had not yet seen on it. "That is a capital crime. If it occurs again, we must part.—It would be very hard on you, after having seemed worthy of our confidence—"

"My dear Alain," said Madame de la Chanterie, "be so good, for my sake, as to say nothing of this act of folly. We must not expect too much of a new-comer who has had no great sorrows, who has no religion—who has nothing, in fact, but great curiosity concerning every vocation, and who as yet does not believe in us."

"Forgive me, Madame," replied Godefroid. "From this moment I will be worthy of you; I submit to every test you may think necessary before initiating me into the secret of your labors; and if Monsieur the Abbé will undertake to enlighten me, I give myself up to him, soul and reason."

These words made Madame de la Chanterie so happy that a faint flush rose to her cheeks, she clasped Godefroid's

hand and pressed it, saying, with strange emotion, "That is well!"

In the evening, after dinner, Godefroid saw a Vicar-General of the Diocese of Paris, who came to call, two canons, two retired mayors of Paris, and a lady who devoted herself to the poor. There was no gambling; the conversation was general, and cheerful without being futile.

A visitor who greatly surprised Godefroid was the Comtesse de Saint-Cygne, one of the loftiest stars of the aristocratic spheres, whose drawing-room was quite inaccessible to the citizen class and to parvenus. The mere presence of this great lady in Madame de la Chanterie's room was sufficiently amazing; but the way in which the two women met and treated each other was to Godefroid quite inexplicable, for it bore witness to an intimacy and constant intercourse which proved the high merit of Madame de la Chanterie. Madame de Saint-Cygne was gracious and friendly to her friend's four friends, and very respectful to Monsieur Nicolas.

As may be seen, social vanity still had a hold on Godefroid, who, hitherto undecided, now determined to yield, with or without conviction, to everything Madame de la Chanterie and her friends might require of him, to succeed in being affiliated by them to their Order, or initiated into their secrets, promising himself that until then he would not definitely commit himself.

On the following day, he went to the bookkeeper recommended by Madame de la Chanterie, agreed with him as to the hours when they were to work together, and so disposed of all his time; for the Abbé de Vèze was to catechise him in the morning, he spent two hours of every day learning bookkeeping, and between breakfast and dinner he worked at the exercises and imaginary commercial correspondence set him by his master.

Some few days thus passed, during which Godefroid learned the charm of a life of which every hour has its employment. The recurrence of the same duties at fixed



hours, and perfect regularity, sufficiently account for many happy lives, and prove how deeply the founders of religious orders had meditated on human nature. Godefroid, who had made up his mind to learn of the Abbé de Vèze, had already begun to feel qualms as to his future life, and to discover that he was ignorant of the importance of religious matters.

Finally, day by day, Madame de la Chanterie, with whom he always sat for about an hour after the second breakfast, revealed some fresh treasures of her nature; he had never conceived of goodness so complete, so all-embracing. A woman as old as Madame de la Chanterie seemed to be has none of the triviality of a young woman; she is a friend who may offer you every feminine dainty, who displays all the grace and refinement with which Nature inspires woman to please man, but who no longer asks for a return; she may be execrable or exquisite, for all her demands on life are buried beneath the skin—or are dead; and Madame de la Chanterie was exquisite. She seemed never to have been young; her looks never spoke of the past. Far from allaying his curiosity, Godefroid's increased intimacy with this beautiful character, and the discoveries he made day by day, increased his desire to know something of the previous history of the woman he now saw as a saint. Had she ever loved? Had she been married? Had she been a mother? There was nothing in her suggestive of the old maid; she had all the elegance of a woman of birth; and her strong health, and the extraordinary charm of her conversation, seemed to reveal a heavenly life, a sort of ignorance of the world. Excepting the worthy and cheerful Alain, all these persons had known suffering; but Monsieur Nicolas himself seemed to give the palm of martyrdom to Madame de la Chanterie; nevertheless, the memory of her sorrows was so entirely suppressed by Catholic resignation, and her secret occupations, that she seemed to have been always happy.

"You are the life of your friends," said Godefroid to her

one day. "You are the bond that unites them; you are the housekeeper, so to speak, of a great work; and as we are all mortal, I cannot but wonder what would become of your association without you."

"Yes, that is what they fear; but Providence—to whom we owe our bookkeeper," said she with a smile—"will doubtless provide. However, I shall think it over—"

"And will your bookkeeper soon find himself at work for your business?" asked Godefroid, laughing.

"That must depend on him," she said with a smile. "If he is sincerely religious, truly pious, has not the smallest conceit, does not trouble his head about the wealth of the establishment, and endeavors to rise superior to petty social considerations by soaring on the wings God has bestowed on us—"

"Which are they?"

"Simplicity and purity," replied Madame de la Chanterie. "Your ignorance proves that you neglect reading your book," she added, laughing at the innocent trap she had laid to discover whether Godefroid read the "Imitation of Christ." "Soak your mind in Saint Paul's chapter on Charity. It is not you who will be devoted to us, but we to you," she said with a lofty look, "and it will be your part to keep account of the greatest riches ever possessed by any sovereign; you will have the same enjoyment of them as we have; and let me tell you, if you remember the Thousand and One Nights, that the treasures of Aladdin are as nothing in comparison with ours. Indeed, for a year past, we have not known what to do; it was too much for us. We needed a bookkeeper."

As she spoke she studied Godefroid's face; he knew not what to think of this strange confidence; but the scene between Madame de la Chanterie and the elder Madame Mongenod had often recurred to him, and he hesitated between doubt and belief.

"Yes, you would be very fortunate!" said she.

Godefroid was so consumed by curiosity that from that

instant he resolved to undermine the reserve of the four friends, and to ask them about themselves. Now, of all Madame de la Chanterie's boarders, the one who most attracted Godefroid, and who was the most fitted in all ways to invite the sympathy of people of every class, was the kindly, cheerful, and unaffected Monsieur Alain. By what means had Providence guided this simple-minded being to this secular convent, where the votaries lived under rules as strictly observed, in perfect freedom and in the midst of Paris, as though they were under the sternest of Priors? What drama, what catastrophe, had made him turn aside from his road through the world to take a path so hard to tread across the troubles of a great city?

One evening Godefroid determined to call on his neighbor, with the purpose of satisfying a curiosity which was more excited by the incredibility of any catastrophe in such a man's life than it could have been by the expectation of listening to some terrible episode in the life of a pirate.

On hearing the reply, "Come in," in answer to two modest raps on the door, Godefroid turned the key, which was always in the lock, and found Monsieur Alain seated in his chimney corner, reading a chapter of the "Imitation" before going to bed by the light of two wax candles with green shades, such as whist-players use. The worthy man had on his trousers and a dressing-gown of thick gray flannel; his feet were raised to the level of the fire on a hassock worked in cross-stitch—as his slippers were also—by Madame de la Chanterie. His striking old head, with its circlet of white hair, almost resembling that of an old monk, stood out, a lighter spot against the brown background of an immense armchair.

Monsieur Alain quietly laid his book, with its worn corners, on the little table with twisted legs, while with the other hand he waved the young man to the second armchair, removing his glasses, which nipped the end of his nose.



"Are you unwell, that you have come down so late?" he asked.

"Dear Monsieur Alain," Godefroid frankly replied, "I am a prey to curiosity which a single word from you will prove to be very innocent or very indiscreet, and that is enough to show you in what spirit I shall venture to ask a question."

"Oh, ho! and what is it?" said he, with an almost mischievous sparkle in his eye.

"What was the circumstance that induced you to lead the life you lead here? For, to embrace such a doctrine of utter renunciation, a man must be disgusted with the world, must have been deeply wounded, or have wounded others."

"Why, why, my boy?" replied the old man, and his full lips parted in one of those smiles which made his ruddy mouth one of the most affectionate that the genius of a painter could conceive of. "May he not feel touched to the deepest pity by the sight of the woes to be seen within the walls of Paris? Did Saint Vincent de Paul need the goad of remorse or of wounded vanity to devote himself to foundling babes?"

"Such an answer shuts my mouth all the more effectually, because if ever a soul was a match for that of the Christian hero, it is yours," replied Godefroid.

In spite of the thickening given by age to his yellow and wrinkled face, the old man colored crimson, for he might seem to have invited the eulogium, though his well-known modesty forbade the idea that he had thought of it. Godefroid knew full well that Madame de la Chanterie's guests had no taste for this kind of incense. And yet good Monsieur Alain's guilelessness was more distressed by this scruple than a young maid would have been by some evil suggestion.

"Though I am far from resembling him in spirit," replied Monsieur Alain, "I certainly am like him in appearance—"

Godefroid was about to speak, but was checked by a gesture from the old man whose nose had in fact the bulbous

appearance of the Saint's, and whose face, much like that of some old vinedresser, was the very duplicate of the coarse, common countenance of the founder of the Foundling Hospital. "As to that, you are right," he went on; "my vocation to this work was the result of an impulse of repentance in consequence of an adventure—"

"An adventure! You!" said Godefroid softly, who at this word forgot what he had been about to say.

"Oh, the story I have to tell will seem to you a mere trifle, a foolish business; but before the tribunal of conscience it looked different. If, after having heard me, you persist in your wish to join in our labors, you will understand that feelings are in inverse proportion to our strength of soul, and that a matter which would not trouble a Free-thinker may greatly weigh on a feeble Christian."

After this prelude, the neophyte's curiosity had risen to an indescribable pitch. What could be the crime of this good soul whom Madame de la Chanterie had nicknamed her *Paschal Lamb*? It was as exciting as a book entitled "The Crimes of a Sheep." Sheep, perhaps, are ferocious to the grass and flowers. If we listen to one of the mildest Republicans of our day, the best creatures living are cruel to something. But good Monsieur Alain! He, who, like Sterne's Uncle Toby, would not crush a fly when it had stung him twenty times! This beautiful soul—tortured by repentance!

These reflections filled up the pause made by the old man after he had said, "Listen, then!" and during which he pushed forward the footstool under Godefroid's feet that they might share it.

"I was a little over thirty," said he; "it was in the year '98, so far as I recollect, a time when young men of thirty had the experience of men of sixty. One morning, a little before my breakfast hour at nine o'clock, my old house-keeper announced one of the few friends left to me by the storms of the Revolution. So my first words were to ask him to breakfast. My friend, whose name was Mongenod;

a young fellow of eight-and-twenty, accepted, but with some hesitancy. I had not seen him since 1793—”

“Mongenod!” cried Godefroid, “the—?”

“If you want to know the end of the story before the beginning,” the old man put in with a smile, “how am I to tell it?”

Godefroid settled himself with an air that promised perfect silence.

“When Mongenod had seated himself,” the good man went on, “I observed that his shoes were dreadfully worn. His spotted stockings had been so often washed that it was hard to recognize that they were of silk. His knee-breeches were of nankeen-colored kerseymere, so faded as to tell of long wear, emphasized by stains in many places, and their buckles, instead of steel, seemed to me to be of common iron; his shoe-buckles were to match. His flowered white waistcoat, yellow with long use, his shirt with its frayed plaited frill, revealed extreme though decent poverty. Finally, his coat—a *houppelande*, as we called such a coat, with a single collar like a very short cape—was enough to assure me that my friend had fallen on bad times. This coat of nut-brown cloth, extremely threadbare, and brushed with excessive care, had a rim of grease or powder round the collar, and buttons off which the plating had worn to the copper. In fact, the whole outfit was so wretched that I could not bear to look at it. His crush hat—a semicircular structure of beaver, which it was then customary to carry under one arm instead of wearing it on the head—must have survived many changes of government.

“However, my friend had no doubt just spent a few sous to have his head dressed by a barber, for he was freshly shaved, and his hair, fastened into a club with a comb, was luxuriously powdered, and smelled of pomatum. I could see two chains hanging parallel out of his fobs, chains of tarnished steel, but no sign of the watches within. It was winter, but Mongenod had no cloak, for some large drops of melting snow fallen from the eaves under which he had



walked for shelter lay on the collar of his coat. When he drew off his rabbit-fur gloves and I saw his right hand, I could perceive the traces of some kind of hard labor.

"Now, his father, an advocate in the higher court, had left him some little fortune—five or six thousand francs a year. I at once understood that Mongenod had come to borrow of me. I had in a certain hiding-place two hundred louis in gold, an enormous sum at that time, when it represented I know not how many hundred thousand francs in paper *assignats*.

"Mongenod and I had been schoolfellows at the Collège des Grassins, and we had been thrown together again in the same lawyer's office—an honest man, the worthy Bordin. When two men have spent their boyhood together and shared the follies of their youth, there is an almost sacred bond of sympathy between them; the man's voice and look stir certain chords in your heart, which never vibrate but to the particular memories that he can rouse. Even if you have some cause to complain of such a comrade, that does not wipe out every claim of friendship, and between us there had not been the slightest quarrel.

"In 1787, when his father died, Mongenod had been a richer man than I; and though I have never borrowed from him, I had owed to him certain pleasures which my father's strictness would have prohibited. But for my friend's generosity, I should not have seen the first performance of the 'Marriage of Figaro.'

"Mongenod was at that time what was called a finished gentleman, a man about town and attentive to 'the ladies.' I constantly reproved him for his too great facility in making friends and obliging them; his purse was constantly open, he lived largely, he would have stood surety for you after meeting you twice.—Dear me, dear me! You have started me on reminiscences of my youth!" cried Monsieur Alain, with a bright smile at Godefroid as he paused.

"You are not vexed with me?" said Godefroid.

"No, no. And you may judge by the minute details I am giving you how large a place the event filled in my life.—Mongenod, with a good heart and plenty of courage, something of a Voltairean, was inclined to play the fine gentleman," Monsieur Alain went on. "His education at the Grassins, where noblemen's sons were to be met, and his adventures of gallantry, had given him the polish of men of rank, in those days termed Aristocrats. So you may imagine how great was my consternation at observing in Mongenod such signs of poverty as degraded him in my eyes from the elegant young Mongenod I had known in 1787, when my eyes wandered from his face to examine his clothes.

"However, at that time of general public penury, some wily folk assumed an appearance of wretchedness; and as others no doubt had ample reasons for assuming a disguise, I hoped for some explanation, and invited it.

"What a plight you are in, my dear Mongenod!" said I, accepting a pinch of snuff, which he offered me from a box of imitation gold.

"Sad enough!" replied he. "I have but one friend left—and you are that friend. I have done everything in the world to avoid coming to this point, but I have come to ask you to loan me a hundred louis. It is a large sum," said he, noticing my surprise, "but if you loan me no more than fifty, I shall never be able to repay you; whereas, if I should fail in what I am undertaking, I shall still have fifty louis to try some other road to fortune, and I do not yet know what inspiration despair may bring me."

"Then, have you nothing?" said I.

"I have," said he, hiding a tear, "just five sous left out of my last piece of silver. To call on you, I had my boots cleaned and my head dressed. I have the clothes on my back.—But," he went on, with a desperate shrug, "I owe my landlady a thousand crowns in assignats, and the man at the cookshop yesterday refused to trust me. So I have nothing—nothing."

"And what do you propose to do?" said I, insistently meddling with his private affairs.

"To enlist if you refuse to help me."

"You, a soldier! You—Mongenod!"

"I will get killed, or I will be General Mongenod."

"Well," said I, really moved, 'eat your breakfast in peace; I have a hundred louis—'

"And here," said the good man, looking slyly at Godefroid, "I thought it necessary to tell a little lender's fib."

"But it is all I have in the world," I said to Mongenod. 'I was waiting till the Funds had gone down to the lowest mark to invest my money, but I will place it in your hands, and you may regard me as your partner; I leave it to your conscience to repay me the whole in due time and place. An honest man's conscience,' I added, 'is the best possible security.'

"Mongenod looked hard at me as I spoke, seeming to stamp my words on his heart. He held out his right hand, I gave him my left, and we clasped hands—I, greatly moved, and he, without restraining two tears which now trickled down his thin cheeks. The sight of those tears wrung my heart; and I was still more unnerved when, forgetful of everything in such a moment, Mongenod, to wipe them away, pulled out a ragged bandanna.

"Wait here," said I, running off to my hidden store, my heart as full as though I had heard a woman confess that she loved me. I returned with two rolls of fifty louis each.

"Here—count them."

"But he would not count them; he looked about him for a writing-table in order, as he said, to give me a receipt. I positively refused to have one.

"If I were to die," said I, 'my heirs would worry you. This is a matter between you and me.'

"Finding me so true a friend, Mongenod presently lost the haggard and anxious expression he had worn on entering, and became cheerful. My housekeeper gave us oysters,



white wine, an omelet, kidneys *à la brochette*, and the remains of a *pâté de Chartres* sent me by my mother; a little dessert, coffee, and West Indian liqueur. Mongenod, who had fasted for two days, was the better for it. We sat till three in the afternoon talking over our life before the Revolution, the best friends in the world.

"Mongenod told me how he had lost his fortune. In the first instance, the reduction of the dividends on the Hotel de Ville had deprived him of two-thirds of his income, for his father had invested the larger part of his fortune in municipal securities; then, after selling his house in the Rue de Savoie, he had been obliged to accept payment in *assignats*; he had then taken it into his head to run a newspaper, 'La Sentinelle,' and at the end of six months was forced to fly. At the present moment all his hopes hung on the success of a comic opera called 'Les Péruviens.' This last confession made me quake. Mongenod, as an author, having spent his all on the 'Sentinelle,' and living no doubt at the theatre, mixed up with Feydeau's singers, with musicians, and the motley world behind the curtain, did not seem to me like the same, like my Mongenod. I shuddered a little. But how could I get back my hundred louis? I could see the two rolls, one in each fob like the barrel of a pistol.

"Mongenod went away. When I found myself alone, no longer face to face with his bitter and cruel poverty, I began to reflect in spite of myself; I was sober again. 'Mongenod,' thought I to myself, 'has no doubt sunk as low as possible; he has acted a little farce for my benefit!' His glee when he saw me calmly hand over so vast a sum now struck me as that of a stage rascal cheating some Gêronte. I ended where I ought to have begun, resolved to make some inquiries about my friend Mongenod, who had written his address on the back of a playing-card.

"A feeling of delicacy kept me from going to see him the next day; he might have ascribed my haste to distrust of him. Two days after I found my whole time absorbed

by various business; and it was not, in fact, till a fortnight had elapsed that, seeing no more of Mongenod, I made my way from La Croix-Rouge, where I then lived, to the Rue des Moineaux, where he lived.

"Mongenod was lodged in a furnished house of the meanest description; but his landlady was a very decent woman, the widow of a farmer-general who had died on the scaffold. She, completely ruined, had started with a few louis the precarious business of letting rooms. Since then she has rented seven houses in the neighborhood of Saint-Roch and made a fortune.

" 'Citizen Mongenod is out,' said she. 'But there is some one at home.'

"This excited my curiosity. I climbed to the fifth floor. A charming young woman opened the door! Oh! A person of exquisite beauty, who, looking at me doubtfully, stood behind the partly opened door.

" 'I am Alain,' said I, 'Mongenod's friend.'

"At once the door was wide open, and I went into a horrible garret, which the young woman had, however, kept scrupulously clean. She pushed forward a chair to the hearth piled with ashes, but with no fire, where in one corner I saw a common earthenware firepan. The cold was icy.

" 'I am glad, indeed, Monsieur,' said she, taking my hands and pressing them warmly, 'to be able to express my gratitude, for you are our deliverer. But for you I might never have seen Mongenod again. He would have—God knows—have thrown himself into the river. He was desperate when he set out to see you.'

"As I looked at the young lady I was greatly astonished to see that she had a handkerchief bound about her head; and below its folds at the back and on the temples there was a sort of black shadow. Studying it attentively, I discovered that her head was shaved.

" 'Are you ill?' I asked, noticing this strange fact.

"She glanced at herself in a wretched dirty pier-glass, and colored, while tears rose to her eyes.

"‘Yes, Monsieur,’ said she hastily; ‘I had dreadful headaches; I was obliged to cut off my hair, which fell to my heels—’

"‘Have I the honor of speaking to Madame Mongenod?’ I asked.

"‘Yes, Monsieur,’ said she, with a really heavenly expression.

"‘I made my bow to the poor little lady, and went downstairs, intending to make the landlady give me some information, but she was gone out. It struck me that the young woman had sold her hair to buy bread. I went off at once to a wood merchant, and sent in half a load of wood, begging the carter and the sawyers to give the lady a receipted bill to the name of Mongenod.

"‘And there ends the phase of my life which I long called my foolish stage,’ said Monsieur Alain, clasping his hands and uplifting them a little with a repentant gesture.

Godefroid could not help smiling; but he was, as will be seen, quite wrong to smile.

"‘Two days later,’ the good man went on, ‘I met one of those men who are neither friends nor strangers—persons whom we see from time to time, in short, an acquaintance, as we say—a Monsieur Barillaud, who, as we happened to speak of ‘Les Péruviens,’ proclaimed himself a friend of the author’s.

"‘Thou know’st Citizen Mongenod?’ said I—for at that time we were still required by law to address each other with the familiar *tu*,’ said he to Godefroid in a parenthesis.

"‘The citizen looked at me,’ said Monsieur Alain, resuming the thread of his story, and exclaimed—

"‘I only wish I had never known him, for he has borrowed money of me many a time, and is so much my friend as not to return it. He is a queer fellow! the best old boy alive, but full of illusions!—An imagination of fire.—I will do him justice; he does not mean to be dishonest, only, as he is always deceiving himself about a thousand things, he is led into conduct that is not altogether straight.’



“ ‘How much does he owe you?’

“ ‘Oh, a few hundred crowns. He is a regular sieve. No one knows where his money goes, for he perhaps does not know that himself.’

“ ‘Has he any expedients?’

“ ‘Oh, dear, yes!’ said Barillaud, laughing. ‘At this moment he is talking of buying up land among the wild men in the United States.’

“ ‘I went away with this drop of vitriol shed by slander on my heart to turn all my best feelings sour. I went to call on my old master in the law, who was always my counsellor. As soon as I had told him the secret of my loan to Mongenod, and the way in which I had acted—

“ ‘What,’ cried he, ‘is it a clerk of mine that can behave so? You should have put him off a day and have come to me. Then you would have known that I had shown Mongenod the door. He has already borrowed from me in the course of a year more than a hundred crowns in silver, an enormous sum! And only three days before he went to breakfast with you, he met me in the street and described his misery in such desperate language that I gave him two louis.’

“ ‘Well, if I am the dupe of a clever actor, so much the worse for him rather than for me!’ said I. ‘But what is to be done?’

“ ‘At any rate, you must try to get some acknowledgment out of him, for a debtor however worthless may recover himself, and then you may be paid.’

“ ‘Thereupon Bordin took out of one of the drawers of his table a wrapper on which was written the name of Mongenod; he showed me three acknowledgments, each for a hundred livres.

“ ‘The first time he comes,’ said he, ‘I shall make him add on the interest and the two louis I gave him, and whatever money he asks for; and then he must sign an acceptance and a statement, saying that interest accrues from the first day of the loan. That, at any rate, will be all in order; I shall have some means of getting paid.’

" 'Well, then,' said I to Bordin, 'cannot you put me as much in order as yourself? For you are an honest man, and what you do will be right.'

" 'In this way I remain the master of the field,' replied the lawyer. 'When a man behaves as you have done, he is at the mercy of another who may simply make game of him. Now I don't choose to be laughed at. A retired Public Prosecutor of the Chatelet! Bless me, what next!—Every man to whom you loan money as recklessly as you loaned it to Mongenod, sooner or later thinks of it as his own. It is no longer your money; it is his money; you are his creditor, a very inconvenient person. The debtor then tries to be quit of you by a compromise with his conscience, and seventy-five out of every hundred will try to avoid meeting you again to the end of his days—'

" 'Then you look for no more than twenty-five per cent of honest men?'

" 'Did I say so?' said he, with an ironical smile. 'That is a large allowance!'

" A fortnight later I had a note from Bordin desiring me to call on him to fetch my receipt. I went.

" 'I tried to snatch back fifty louis for you,' said he.—I had told him all about my conversation with Mongenod.—'But the birds are flown. You may say good-by to your yellow-boys! Your canary-birds have fled to warmer climes. We have a very cunning rascal to deal with. Did he not assure me that his wife and his father-in-law had set out for the United States with sixty of your louis to buy land, and that he intended to join them there? To make a fortune, as he said, so as to return to pay his debts, of which he handed me the schedule drawn out in due form; for he begged me to keep myself informed as to what became of his creditors. Here is the schedule,' added Bordin, showing me a wrapper on which was noted the total. 'Seventeen thousand francs in hard cash! With such a sum as that a house might be bought worth two thousand crowns a year.'

" After replacing the packet, he gave me a bill of ex-

change for a sum equivalent to a hundred louis in gold, stated in assignats, with a letter in which Mongenod acknowledged the debt with interest on a hundred louis d'or.

"'So now I am all safe?' said I to Bordin.

"'He will not deny the debt,' replied my old master. 'But where there are no effects, the King—that is to say, the Directoire—has no rights.'

"I thereupon left him. Believing myself to have been robbed by a trick that evades the law, I withdrew my esteem from Mongenod, and was very philosophically resigned.

"It is not without a reason that I dwell on these commonplace and apparently unimportant details," the good man went on, looking at Godefroid. "I am trying to show you how I was led to act as most men act, blindly, and in contempt of certain rules which even savages do not disregard in the most trifling matters. Many men would justify themselves by the authority of Bordin; but at this day I feel that I had no excuse. As soon as we are led to condemn one of our fellows, and to refuse him our esteem for life, we ought to rely solely on our own judgment—and even then!—Ought we to set up our own feelings as a tribunal before which to arraign our neighbor? Where would the law be? What should be our standard of merit? Would not a weakness in me be strength in my neighbor? So many men, so many different circumstances would there be for each deed; for there are no two identical sets of conditions in human existence. Society alone has the right of reproving its members; for I do not grant it that of punishing them. A mere reprimand is sufficient, and brings with it cruelty enough.

"So as I listened to the haphazard opinions of a Parisian, admiring my former teacher's acumen, I condemned Mongenod," the good man went on, after drawing from his narrative this noble moral.

"The performance of 'Les Péruviens' was announced. I expected to have a ticket for the first night; I conceived myself in some way his superior. As a result of his indebtedness, my friend seemed to me a vassal who owed me many



things besides the interest on my money. We are all alike!

"Not only did Mongenod send me no ticket, but I saw him at a distance coming along the dark passage under the Théâtre Feydeau, well dressed—nay, almost elegant; he affected not to see me; then, when he had passed me, and I thought I would run after him, he had vanished down some cross passage. This irritated me extremely; and my annoyance, far from being transient, increased as time went on.

"This was why. A few days after this incident I wrote to Mongenod much in these words—

" 'MY FRIEND—You should not regard me as indifferent to anything that can happen to you, whether for good or ill. Does the 'Péruviens' come up to your expectations? You forgot me—you had every right to do so—at the first performance, when I should have applauded you heartily! However, I hope, all the same, that you may find Peru in the piece, for I can invest my capital, and I count on you when the bill falls due. Your friend, ALAIN.' "

"After waiting for a fortnight and receiving no answer, I called in the Rue des Moineaux. The landlady told me that the little wife had, in fact, set out with her father, at the date named by Mongenod to Bordin. Mongenod always left his garret early in the morning, and did not come in till late at night. Another fortnight passed; I wrote another letter in these terms—

" 'MY DEAR MONGENOD—I see nothing of you; you do not answer my notes; I cannot at all understand your conduct; and if I were to behave so to you, what would you think of me?' "

"I did not sign myself 'Your friend.' I wrote 'With best regards.' "

"A month slipped by; no news of Mongenod. The

'Péruviens' had not obtained so great a success as Mongenod had counted on. I paid for a seat at the twentieth performance, and I found a small house. And yet Madame Scio was very fine in it. I was told in the *foyer* that there would be a few more performances of the piece. I went seven times to call on Mongenod; he was never at home, and each time I left my name with the landlady. So then I wrote again—

" 'Monsieur, if you do not wish to lose my respect after forfeiting my friendship, you will henceforth treat me as a stranger—that is to say, with civility—and you will tell me whether you are prepared to pay me when your note of hand falls due. I shall act in accordance with your reply.

" 'Yours faithfully, ALAIN.'

"No reply. It was now 1799; a year had elapsed all but two months.

"When the bill fell due I went to see Bordin. Bordin took the note of hand, and then took legal proceedings. The reverses experienced by the French armies had had such a depressing effect on the Funds that five francs a year could be purchased for seven francs. Thus, for a hundred louis in gold, I might have had nearly fifteen hundred francs a year. Every morning, as I read the paper over my cup of coffee, I would exclaim—

" 'Confound that Mongenod! But for him, I could have a thousand crowns a year!'

"Mongenod had become my chronic aversion; I thundered at him even when I was walking in the street.

" 'Bordin is after him!' said I to myself. 'He will catch him—and serve him right!'

"My rage expended itself in imprecations; I cursed the man; I believed him capable of any crime. Yes! Monsieur Barillaud was quite right in what he said.

"Well, one morning my debtor walked in, no more disconcerted than if he had not owed me a centime; and I,

when I saw him, I felt all the shame that should have been his. I was like a criminal caught in the act; I was quite ill at ease. The 18th of Brumaire was past, everything was going on well, and Bonaparte had set out to fight the battle of Marengo.

"'It is unlucky, Monsieur,' said I, 'that I should owe your visit solely to the intervention of a bailiff.'"

"Mongenod took a chair and sat down.

"'I have come to tell you,' said he, with the familiar *tu*, 'that I cannot possibly pay you.'"

"'You have lost me the chance of investing my money before the arrival of the First Consul—at that time I could have made a little fortune—'

"'I know it, Alain,' said he; 'I know it. But what will you get by prosecuting me for debt and plunging me deeper by loading me with costs? I have letters from my father-in-law and my wife; they have bought some land and sent me the bill for the necessaries of the house; I have had to spend all I had in those purchases. Now—and nobody can hinder me—I mean to sail by a Dutch vessel from Flushing, whither I have sent all my small possessions. Bonaparte has won the battle of Marengo, peace will be signed, and I can join my family without fear—for my dear little wife was expecting a baby.'"

"'And so you have sacrificed me to your own interests?' cried I.

"'Yes,' said he; 'I thought you my friend.'"

"At that moment I felt small as compared to Mongenod, so sublime did that speech seem to me, so simple and grand.

"'Did I not tell you so,' he went on; 'was I not absolutely frank with you—here, on this very spot? I came to you, Alain, as being the only man who would appreciate me.—Fifty louis would be wasted, I told you; but if you loaned me a hundred, I would repay them. I fixed no date, for how can I tell when my long struggle with poverty will come to an end? You were my last friend. All my friends, even our old master Bordin, despised me simply because I



wanted to borrow money of them. Oh! Alain, you can never know the dreadful feelings that grip the heart of an honest man fighting misfortune when he goes into another man's house to ask for help!—and all that follows!—I hope you may never know them; they are worse than the anguish of death!

“ ‘You have written me certain letters which, from me under similar circumstances, would have struck you as odious. You expected things of me that were out of my power. You are the only man to whom I attempt to justify myself. In spite of your severity, and though you ceased to be my friend and became only my creditor from the day when Bordin asked me for an acknowledgment of your loan, thus discrediting the handsome agreement we ourselves had come to, here, shaking hands on it with tears in our eyes!—Well, I have forgotten everything but that morning's work.

“ ‘It is in memory of that hour that I have come now to say, “You know not what misfortune is; do not rail at it!—I have not had an hour, not a second, to write to you in reply! Perhaps you would have liked me to come and pay you compliments?—You might as well expect a hare, harassed by dogs and hunters, to rest in a clearing and crop the grass!—I sent you no ticket! No; I had not enough to satisfy those on whom my fate depended. A novice in the theatrical world, I was the prey of musicians, actors, singers, the orchestra. To enable me to join my family overseas, and buy what they need, I sold the ‘*Péruviens*’ to the manager with two other pieces I had in my desk. I am setting out for Holland without a sou. I shall eat dry bread on my journey till I reach Flushing. I have paid my passage, and have nothing more. But for my landlady's compassion, and her trust in me, I should have had to walk to Flushing with a knapsack on my back. And so, in spite of your doubting me, as, but for you, I could not have sent my father-in-law and my wife to New York, I am entirely grateful.”—No, *Monsieur Alain*, I will not forget that the

hundred louis you loaned me might at this time be yielding you an income of fifteen hundred francs.'

" 'I would fain believe you, Mongenod,' said I, almost convinced by the tone in which he poured out this explanation.

" 'At any rate, you no longer address me as Monsieur,' said he eagerly, and looking at me with emotion. 'God knows I should quit France with less regret if I could leave one man behind me in whose eyes I was neither half a rogue, nor a spendthrift, nor a victim to illusions. A man who can love truly, Alain, is never wholly despicable.'

"At these words I held out my hand; he took it and pressed it.

" 'Heaven protect you!' said I.

" 'We are still friends?' he asked.

" 'Yes,' I replied; 'it shall never be said that my school-fellow, the friend of my youth, set out for America under the ban of my anger!—'

"Mongenod embraced me with tears in his eyes, and rushed off to the door.

"When I met Bordin a few days afterward, I told him the story of our interview, and he replied with a smile—

" 'I only hope it was not all part of the performance!—He did not ask you for anything?'

" 'No,' said I.

" 'He came to me too, and I was almost as weak as you; but he asked me for something to get food on the way. However, he who lives will see!'

"This remark of Bordin's made me fear lest I had yielded stupidly to an impulse of feeling.

" 'Still, he too, the Public Prosecutor, did the same,' said I to myself.

"It is unnecessary, I think, to explain to you how I lost all my fortune excepting the other hundred louis, which I invested in Government securities when prices had risen so high that I had barely five hundred francs a year to live upon by the time I was four-and-thirty.—By Bordin's in-

terest I obtained an appointment at eight hundred francs a year in a branch of the Mont de Piété, Rue des Petits Augustins. I lived in the humblest way; I lodged on the third floor of a house in the Rue des Marais in an apartment consisting of two rooms and a closet for two hundred and fifty francs. I went out to dinner in a boarding-house where there was an open table, and for this I paid forty francs a month. In the evening I did some copying. Ugly as I am, and very poor, I had to give up all ideas of marriage—”

As he heard this verdict pronounced on himself by poor Alain in a tone of angelic resignation, Godefroid gave a little start, which proved better than any speech could have done the similarity of their fate; and the good man, in reply to this eloquent gesture, seemed to pause for his hearer to speak.

“And no one ever loved you?” asked Godefroid.

“No one,” he replied, “excepting Madame, who returns to all of us alike our love for her—a love I might almost call divine.—You must have seen it: we live in her life, as she lives in ours; we have but one soul among us; and though our enjoyments are not physical, they are none the less very intense, for we live only through the heart.—How can we help it, my dear boy? By the time women are capable of appreciating moral qualities they have done with externals, and are growing old.—I have suffered much, I can tell you!”

“Ah! that is the stage I am at—” said Godefroid.

“Under the Empire,” the old man went on, bowing his head, “dividends were not very punctually paid; we had to be prepared for deferred payment. From 1802 to 1814 not a week passed that I did not ascribe my difficulties to Mongenod: ‘But for Mongenod,’ I used to think, ‘I might have been married. But for him I should not be obliged to live in privation.’—But sometimes, too, I would say to myself, ‘Perhaps the poor man is pursued by ill-luck out there!’

“In 1806, one day when I found my life a heavy burden to bear, I wrote him a long letter that I despatched *via*



Holland. I had no answer; and for three years I waited, founding hopes on that reply which were constantly deceived. At last I resigned myself to my fate. To my five hundred francs of dividends, and twelve hundred francs of salary from the Mont de Piété, for it was raised, I added five hundred for my work as bookkeeper to a perfumer, Monsieur Birotteau. Thus I not only made both ends meet, but I saved eight hundred francs a year. By the beginning of 1814, I was able to invest nine thousand francs of savings in the Funds, buying at forty; thus I had secured sixteen hundred francs a year for my old age. So then, with fifteen hundred francs a year from the Mont de Piété, six hundred as a bookkeeper, and sixteen hundred in dividends, I had an income of three thousand seven hundred francs. I took rooms in the Rue de Seine, and I lived in rather more comfort.

"My position brought me into contact with many of the very poor. For twelve years I have known, better than any one, what the misery of the world is; once or twice I have helped some poor creatures; and I felt the keenest pleasure when, out of ten that I had assisted, one or two families were rescued from their difficulties.

"It struck me that true beneficence did not consist in throwing money to the sufferers. Being charitable, in the common phrase, often appeared to me to be a sort of premium on crime. I set to work to study this question. I was by this time fifty years old, and my life was drawing to a close.

"'What good am I in the world?' I asked myself. 'To whom can I leave my money? When I shall have furnished my rooms handsomely, have secured a good cook, have made my life suitably comfortable, what am I to do with my time?'

"For eleven years of revolutions and fifteen years of poverty had wasted the happiest part of my life, had consumed it in labors that were fruitless, or devoted solely to the preservation of my person! At such an age no one can

make an obscure and penurious youth the starting-point to reach a brilliant position; but every one may make himself useful. I understood, in short, that a certain supervision and much good advice would increase tenfold the value of money given, for the poor always need guidance; to enable them to profit by the work they do for others, it is not the intelligence of the speculator that is wanting.

"A few happy results that I achieved made me extremely proud. I discerned both an aim and an occupation, to say nothing of the exquisite pleasure to be derived from playing the part of Providence, even on the smallest scale."

"And you now play it on a large scale?" said Godefroid eagerly.

"Oh, you want to know too much!" said the old man. "Nay, nay.—Would you believe it," he went on after a pause, "the smallness of the means at my command constantly brought my thoughts back to Mongenod?"

"But for Mongenod I could have done so much more," I used to reflect. 'If a dishonest man had not robbed me of fifteen hundred francs a year,' I often thought, 'I could have helped this or that family.'

"Thus excusing my inability by such an accusation, those to whom I gave nothing but words to comfort them joined me in cursing Mongenod. These maledictions were balm to my heart.

"One morning, in January, 1816, my housekeeper announced — whom do you think? — Mongenod. — Monsieur Mongenod. And who should walk in but the pretty wife, now six-and-thirty, accompanied by three children; then came Mongenod, younger than when he left, for wealth and happiness shed a glory on those they favor. He had gone away lean, pale, yellow, and haggard; he had come back fat and well-liking, as flourishing as a prebendary, and well dressed. He threw himself into my arms, and finding himself coldly welcomed, his first words were:

"'Could I come any sooner, my friend? The seas have only been open since 1815, and it took me eighteen months

to realize my property, close my accounts, and call in my assets. I have succeeded, my friend! When I received your letter in 1806, I set out in a Dutch vessel to bring you home a little fortune; but the union of Holland to the French Empire led to our being taken by the English, who transported me to the coast of Jamaica, whence by good luck I escaped.

"On my return to New York I was a victim to bankruptcy; for Charlotte, during my absence, had not known how to be on her guard against swindlers. So I was compelled to begin again to accumulate a fortune.

"However, here we are at last. From the way the children look at you, you may suppose that they have often heard of the benefactor of the family.'

"Yes, indeed,' said pretty Madame Mongenod, 'we never passed a day without speaking of you. Your share has been allowed for in every transaction. We have longed for the happiness we enjoy at this moment of offering you your fortune, though we have never for a moment imagined that this "rector's tithe" can pay our debt of gratitude.'

"And as she spoke, Madame Mongenod offered me the beautiful casket you see there, which contained a hundred and fifty thousand-franc notes.

"You have suffered much, my dear Alain, I know; but we could imagine all your sufferings, and we racked our brains to find means of sending you money; but without success,' Mongenod went on. 'You tell me you could not marry; but here is our eldest daughter. She has been brought up in the idea that she should be your wife, and she has five hundred thousand francs—'

"God forbid that I should wreck her happiness!' cried I, as I beheld a girl as lovely as her mother had been at her age; and I drew her to me, and kissed her forehead.

"Do not be afraid, my pretty child,' said I. 'A man of fifty and a girl of seventeen—and so ugly an old fellow as I!—Never!'



“ ‘Monsieur,’ said she, ‘my father’s benefactor can never seem ugly in my eyes.’ ”

“This speech, made with spontaneous candor, showed me that all Mongenod had told me was true. I offered him my hand, and we fell into each other’s arms once more.

“ ‘My friend,’ said I, ‘I have often abused you, cursed you—’ ”

“ ‘You had every right, Alain,’ replied he, reddening. ‘You were in poverty through my fault—’ ”

“I took Mongenod’s papers out of a box and restored them to him, after cancelling his note of hand.

“ ‘Now you will all breakfast with me,’ said I to the family party.

“ ‘On condition of your dining with my wife as soon as we are settled,’ said Mongenod, ‘for we arrived only yesterday. We are going to buy a house, and I am about to open a bank in Paris for North American business to leave to that youngster,’ he said, pointing to his eldest son, a lad of fifteen.

“We spent the afternoon together, and in the evening we all went to the theatre, for Mongenod and his party were dying to see a play. Next day I invested in the Funds, and had then an income of about fifteen thousand francs in all. This released me from bookkeeping in the evening, and allowed me to give up my appointment, to the great satisfaction of all my subordinates.

“My friend died in 1827, after founding the banking house of Mongenod and Co., which made immense profits on the first loans issued at the time of the Restoration. His daughter, to whom he subsequently gave about a million of francs, married the Vicomte de Fontaine. The son whom you know is not yet married; he lives with his mother and his younger brother. We find them ready with all the money we may need.

“Frédéric—for his father, in America, had named him after me—Frédéric Mongenod, at seven-and-thirty, is one of the most skilful and respected bankers in Paris.

"Not very long since Madame Mongenod confessed to me that she had sold her hair for two crowns of six livres to be able to buy some bread. She gives twenty-four loads of wood every year, which I distribute among the poor, in return for the half-load I once sent her."

"Then this accounts for your connection with the house of Mongenod," said Godefroid. "And your fortune—"

The old man still looked at Godefroid with the same expression of mild irony.

"Pray go on," said Godefroid, seeing by Monsieur Alain's manner that he had more to say.

"This conclusion, my dear Godefroid, made the deepest impression on me. Though the man who had suffered so much, though my friend had forgiven me my injustice, I could not forgive myself."

"Oh!" said Godefroid.

"I determined to devote all my surplus income, about ten thousand francs a year, to acts of rational beneficence," Monsieur Alain calmly went on. "At about that time I met an Examining Judge of the department of the Seine named Popinot, whose death we mourned three years ago, and who for fifteen years practiced the most enlightened charity in the Saint-Marcel quarter. He, in concert with the venerable vicar of Notre-Dame and with Madame, planned the work in which we are all engaged, and which, since 1823, has secretly effected some good results.

"This work has found a soul in Madame de la Chanterie; she is really the very spirit of the undertaking. The vicar has succeeded in making us more religious than we were at first, demonstrating the necessity for being virtuous ourselves if we desire to inspire virtue—for preaching, in fact, by example. And the further we progress in that path, the happier we are among ourselves. Thus it was my repentance for having misprized the heart of my boyhood's friend which led me to the idea of devoting to the poor, through myself, the fortune he brought home to me, which I accepted

without demurring to the vast sum repaid to me for so small a loan; the application of it made it right."

This narrative, devoid of all emphasis, and told with touching simplicity of tone, gesture, and expression, would have been enough to make Godefroid resolve on joining in this noble and saintly work, if he had not already intended it.

"You know little of the world," said Godefroid, "if you had such scruples over a thing which would never have weighed on any other conscience."

"I know only the wretched," replied the good man. "I have no wish to know a world where men misjudge each other with so little compunction.—Now, it is nearly midnight, and I have to meditate on my chapter of the 'Imitation.'—Good-night."

Godefroid took the kind old man's hand and pressed it with an impulse of genuine admiration.

"Can you tell me Madame de la Chanterie's history?" asked Godefroid.

"It would be impossible without her permission, for it is connected with one of the most terrible incidents of Imperial politics. I first knew Madame through my friend Bordin; he knew all the secrets of that beautiful life; and it was he who led me, so to speak, to this house."

"At any rate, then," said Godefroid, "I thank you for having told me your life; it contains a lesson for me."

"Do you discern its moral?"

"Nay, tell it me," said Godefroid; "for I might see it differently to you—"

"Well, then," said the good man, "pleasure is but an accident in the life of the Christian; it is not his aim and end—and we learn this too late."

"What then happens when we are converted?" asked Godefroid.

"Look there!" said Alain, and he pointed to an inscription in letters of gold on a black ground, which the newcomer had not seen before, as this was the first time he had



ever been into his companion's rooms. He turned round and read the words, "TRANSIRE BENEFACIENDO."

"That, my son, is the meaning we then find in life. That is our motto. If you become one of us, that constitutes your brevet. We read that text and take it as our counsel at every hour of the day, when we rise, when we go to bed, while we dress. Oh! if you could but know what infinite happiness is to be found in carrying out that device!"

"In what way?" said Godefroid, hoping for some explanations.

"In the first place, we are as rich as Baron de Nucingen. —But the 'Imitation' prohibits our calling anything our own; we are but stewards; and if we feel a single impulse of pride, we are not worthy to be stewards. That would not be *transire benefaciendo*; it would be enjoyment in thought. If you say to yourself, with a certain dilation of the nostrils, 'I am playing the part of Providence'—as you might have thought this morning, if you had been in my place, giving new life to a whole family, you are a Sardanapalus at once—and wicked! Not one of our members ever thinks of himself when doing good. You must cast off all vanity, all pride, all self-consciousness; and it is difficult, I can tell you."

Godefroid bid Monsieur Alain good-night, and went to his own rooms, much moved by this story; but his curiosity was excited rather than satisfied, for the chief figure in the picture of this domestic scene was Madame de la Chanterie. This woman's history was to him so supremely interesting that he made the knowledge of it the first aim of his stay in the house. He understood that the purpose for which these five persons were associated was some great charitable endeavor; but he thought much less of that than of his heroine.

The neophyte spent some days in studying these choice spirits, amid whom he found himself, with greater attention than he had hitherto devoted to them; and he became the subject of a moral phenomenon which modern philanthro-

pists have overlooked, from ignorance perhaps. The sphere in which he lived had a direct influence on Godefroid. The law which governs physical nature in respect to the influence of atmospheric conditions on the lives of the beings subject to them, also governs moral nature; whence it is to be inferred that the collecting in masses of the criminal class is one of the greatest social crimes, while absolute isolation is an experiment of which the success is very doubtful. Condemned felons ought, therefore, to be placed in religious institutions and surrounded with prodigies of goodness instead of being left among marvels of evil. The Church may be looked to for perfect devotion to this cause; for if She is ready to send missionaries to barbarous or savage nations, how gladly would She charge her religious Orders with the mission of rescuing and instructing the savages of civilized life! Every criminal is an atheist—often without knowing it.

Godefroid found his five companions endowed with the qualities they demanded of him; they were all free from pride or vanity, all truly humble and pious, devoid of the pretentiousness which constitutes *devoutness* in the invidious sense of the word. These virtues were contagious; he was filled with the desire to imitate these obscure heroes, and he ended by studying with ardor the book he had at first scorned. Within a fortnight he had reduced life to its simplest expression, to what it really is when regarded from the lofty point of view to which the religious spirit leads us. Finally, his curiosity, at first purely worldly and roused by many vulgar motives, became rarefied. He did not cease to be curious; it would have been difficult to lose all interest in the life of Madame de la Chanterie; but, without intending it, he showed a reserve which was fully appreciated by these men, in whom the Holy Spirit had developed wonderful depths of mind, as happens, indeed, with all who devote themselves to a religious life. The concentration of the moral powers, by whatever means or system, increases their scope tenfold.

"Our young friend is not yet a convert," said the good Abbé de Vèze; "but he wishes to be."

An unforeseen circumstance led to the revelation of Madame de la Chanterie's history, so that his intense interest in it was soon satisfied.

Paris was just then engrossed by the investigation of the case of the Barrière Saint-Jacques, one of those hideous trials which mark the history of our assizes. The trial derived its interest from the criminals themselves, whose daring and general superiority to ordinary culprits, with their cynical contempt for justice, really appalled the public. It was a noteworthy fact that no newspaper ever entered the Hotel de la Chanterie, and Godefroid only heard of the rejection of the appeal to the Supreme Court from his master in bookkeeping; the trial had taken place long before he came to Madame de la Chanterie.

"Do you ever meet with such men as these atrocious scoundrels?" he asked his new friends. "Or, when you do, how do you deal with them?"

"In the first place," said Monsieur Nicolas, "there is no such thing as an atrocious scoundrel; there are mad creatures fit only for the asylum at Charenton; but with the exception of those rare pathological exceptions, what we find are simply men without religion, or who argue falsely, and the task of the charitable is to set souls upright and bring the erring into the right way."

"And to the apostle all things are possible," said the Abbé de Vèze; "he has God on his side."

"If you were sent to these two condemned men," said Godefroid, "you could do nothing with them."

"There would not be time," observed Monsieur Alain.

"As a rule," said Monsieur Nicolas, "the souls handed over to be dealt with by the Church are in utter impenitence, and the time is too short for miracles to be wrought. The men of whom you are speaking, if they had fallen into our hands, would have been men of mark; their energy is immense; but when once they have committed murder, it



is impossible to do anything for them; human justice has taken possession of them."

"Then you are averse to capital punishment?" said Godefroid.

Monsieur Nicolas hastily rose and left the room.

"Never speak of capital punishment in the presence of Monsieur Nicolas. He once recognized in a criminal, whose execution it was his duty to superintend, a natural child of his own."

"And who was innocent!" added Monsieur Joseph.

At this moment Madame de la Chanterie, who had not been in the room, came in.

"Still, you must allow," Godefroid went on, addressing Monsieur Joseph, "that society cannot exist without capital punishment, and that these men, whose heads—"

Godefroid felt his mouth suddenly closed by a strong hand, and the Abbé de Vèze led away Madame de la Chanterie, pale and half dead.

"What have you done?" cried Monsieur Joseph. "Take him away, Alain," he said, removing the hand with which he had gagged Godefroid; and he followed the Abbé de Vèze into Madame's room.

"Come with me," said Alain to Godefroid. "You have compelled us to tell you the secrets of Madame's life."

In a few minutes the two friends were together in Monsieur Alain's room, as they had been when the old man had told Godefroid his own history.

"Well," said Godefroid, whose face sufficiently showed his despair at having been the cause of what might be called a catastrophe in this pious household.

"I am waiting till Manon shall have come to say how she is going on," replied the good man, as he heard the woman's step on the stairs.

"Monsieur, Madame is better. Monsieur l'Abbé managed to deceive her as to what had been said," and Manon shot a wrathful glance at Godefroid.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed the unhappy young man, his eyes filling with tears.

"Come, sit down," said Monsieur Alain, seating himself. Then he paused to collect his thoughts.

"I do not know," said the kind old man, "that I have the talent necessary to give a worthy narrative of a life so cruelly tried. You must forgive me if you find the words of so poor a speaker inadequate to the magnitude of the events and catastrophes. You must remember that it is a very long time since I was at school, and that I date from a time when thoughts were held of more importance than effect—from a prosaic age, when we knew not how to speak of things except by their names."

Godefroid bowed with an expression of assent, in which his worthy old friend could discern his sincere admiration, and which plainly said, "I am listening."

"As you have just perceived, my young friend, it would be impossible for you to remain one of us without learning some of the particulars of that saintly woman's life. There are certain ideas, allusions, words, which are absolutely prohibited in this house, since they inevitably reopen wounds, of which the anguish might kill Madame if it were once or twice revived—"

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Godefroid, "what have I done?"

"But for Monsieur Joseph, who happily interrupted you just as you were about to speak of the awful instrument of death, you would have annihilated the poor lady.—It is time that you should be told all; for you will be one of us, of that we are all convinced.

"Madame de la Chanterie," he went on after a short pause, "is descended from one of the first families of Lower Normandy. Her maiden name was Mademoiselle Barbe-Philiberte de Champignelles—of a younger branch of that house; and she was intended to take the veil unless a marriage could be arranged for her with the usual renunciations of property that were commonly required in poor families of

high rank. A certain *Sieur de la Chanterie*, whose family had sunk into utter obscurity, though dating from the time of *Philippe-Auguste's* crusade, was anxious to recover the rank to which so ancient a name gave him a claim in the province of Normandy. But he had fallen quite from his high estate, for he had made money—some three hundred thousand francs—by supplying the commissariat for the army at the time of the war with Hanover. His son, trusting too much to this wealth, which provincial rumor magnified, was living in Paris in a way calculated to cause the father of a family some uneasiness.

“*Mademoiselle de Champignelles'* great merits became famous throughout the district of *le Bessin*; and the old man, whose little fief of *la Chanterie* lay between *Caen* and *Saint-Lô*, heard some expressions of regret that so accomplished a young lady, and one so capable of making a husband happy, should end her days in a convent. On his uttering a wish to seek her out, some hope was given him that he might obtain the hand of *Mademoiselle Philiberte* for his son if he were content to renounce any marriage portion. He went to *Bayeux*, contrived to have two or three meetings with the *Champignelles* family, and was fascinated by the young lady's noble qualities.

“At the age of sixteen, *Mademoiselle de Champignelles* gave promise of what she would become. She evinced well-founded piety, sound good sense, inflexible rectitude—one of those natures which will never veer in its affections even if they are the outcome of duty. The old nobleman, enriched by his somewhat illicit gains, discerned in this charming girl a wife who might keep his son in order by the authority of virtue and the ascendancy of a character that was firm but not rigid; for, as you have seen, no one can be gentler than *Madame de la Chanterie*. Then, no one could be more confiding; even in the decline of life she has the candor of innocence; in her youth she would not believe in evil; such distrust as you may have seen in her she owes to her misfortunes. The old man pledged himself to the



Champignelles to give them a discharge in full for the portion legitimately due to Mademoiselle Philiberte on the signing of the marriage contract; in return, the Champignelles, who were connected with the greatest families, promised to have the fief of la Chanterie created a barony, and they kept their word. The bridegroom's aunt, Madame de Boisfrelon, the wife of the councillor to the Parlement who died in your rooms, promised to leave her fortune to her nephew.

"When all these arrangements were completed between the two families, the father sent for his son. This young man, at the time of his marriage, was five-and-twenty, and already a Master of Appeals; he had indulged in numerous follies with the young gentlemen of the time, living in their style; and the old army contractor had several times paid his debts to a considerable amount. The poor father, foreseeing further dissipation on his son's part, was only too glad to settle a part of his fortune on his daughter-in-law; but he was so cautious as to entail the estate of la Chanterie on the heirs male of the marriage—

"A precaution," added Monsieur Alain in a parenthesis, "which the Revolution made useless."

"As handsome as an angel, and wonderfully skilled in all athletic exercises, the young Master of Appeals had immense powers of charming," he went on. "So Mademoiselle de Champignelles, as you may easily imagine, fell very much in love with her husband. The old man, made very happy by this promising beginning, and hoping that his son was a reformed character, sent the young couple to Paris. This was early in 1788. For nearly a year they were perfectly happy. Madame de la Chanterie was the object of all the little cares, the most delicate attentions that a devoted lover can lavish on the one and only woman he loves. Brief as it was, the honeymoon beamed brightly on the heart of the noble and unfortunate lady.

"As you know, in those days mothers all nursed their infants themselves. Madame de la Chanterie had a daugh-

ter. This time, when a wife ought to be the object of double devotion on her husband's part, was, on the contrary, the beginning of dreadful woes. The Master of Appeals was obliged to sell everything he could part with to pay old debts which he had not confessed, and more recent gambling debts. Then, suddenly the National Assembly dissolved the Supreme Council and the Parlement, and abolished all the great law appointments that had been so dearly purchased. Thus the young couple, with the addition of their child, had no income to rely on but the revenues from the entailed estate, and from the portion settled on Madame de la Chanterie. Twenty months after her marriage this charming woman, at the age of seventeen and a half, found herself reduced to maintaining herself and the child at her breast by the work of her hands, in an obscure street where she hid herself. She then found herself absolutely deserted by her husband, who fell, step by step, into the society of the very lowest kind. Never did she blame her husband, never did she put him in the least in the wrong. She has told us that all through the worst time she prayed to God for her dear Henri.

"The rascal's name was Henri," remarked Monsieur Alain. "It is a name that must never be spoken here, any more than that of Henriette.—To proceed—

"Madame de la Chanterie, who never quitted her little room in the Rue de la Corderie-du-Temple unless to buy food or fetch her work, kept her head above water; thanks partly to an allowance of a hundred francs a month from her father-in-law, who was touched by so much virtue. However, the poor young wife, foreseeing that this support might fail her, had taken up the laborious work of a stay-maker, and worked for a famous dressmaker. In fact, ere-long the old contractor died, and his estate was consumed by his son under favor of the overthrow of the Monarchy.

"The erstwhile Master of Appeals, now one of the most savage of all the presidents of the revolutionary tribunal, had become a terror in Normandy, and could indulge all

his passions. Then, imprisoned in his turn on the fall of Robespierre, the hatred of the department condemned him to inevitable death. Madame de la Chanterie received a farewell letter announcing her husband's fate. She immediately placed her little girl in the care of a neighbor, and went off to the town where the wretch was in confinement, taking with her a few louis, which constituted her whole fortune. This money enabled her to get into the prison. She succeeded in helping her husband to escape, dressing him in clothes of her own, under circumstances very similar to those which not long after favored Madame de la Valette. She was condemned to death, but the authorities were ashamed to carry out this act of revenge, and she was secretly released with the connivance of the Court over which her husband had formerly presided. She got back to Paris on foot without any money, sleeping at farm-houses, and often fed by charity."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Godefroid.

"Wait," said the old man, "that was nothing.—In the course of eight years the poor woman saw her husband three times. The first time the gentleman spent twenty-four hours in his wife's humble lodgings, and went away with all her money, after heaping on her every mark of affection, and leading her to believe in his complete reformation.—'For I could not resist,' said she, 'a man for whom I prayed every day, and who filled my thoughts exclusively.'—The second time Monsieur de la Chanterie came in a dying state, and from some horrible disease! She nursed him, and saved his life; then she tried to reclaim him to decent feeling and a seemly life. After promising everything this angel begged of him, the revolutionary relapsed into hideous debaucheries, and in fact only escaped prosecution by the authorities by taking refuge in his wife's rooms, where he died unmolested.

"Still, all this was nothing!" said Alain, seeing dismay in Godefroid's face.

"No one in the world he had mixed with had known that



the man was married. Two years after the miserable creature's death, she heard that there was a second Madame de la Chanterie, widowed and ruined like herself. The bigamous villain had found two such angels incapable of betraying him.—Toward 1803," the old man went on after a pause, "Monsieur de Boisfrelon, Madame de la Chanterie's uncle, having his name removed from the list of proscribed persons, came back to Paris and paid over to her two hundred thousand francs that the old Commissariat contractor had placed in his keeping, with instructions to hold it in trust for his niece. He persuaded the widow to return to Normandy, where she completed her daughter's education, and, by the advice of the old lawyer, purchased back one of the family estates under very favorable conditions."

"Ah!" sighed Godefroid.

"Oh! all this was nothing!" said Monsieur Alain. "We have not yet come to the hurricane.—To proceed. In 1807, after four years of peace, Madame de la Chanterie saw her only daughter married to a gentleman whose piety, whose antecedents, and fortune seemed a guarantee from every point of view; a man who was reported to be the 'pet lamb' of the best society in the country town where Madame and her daughter spent every winter. Remark: this society consisted of seven or eight families belonging to the highest French nobility—the d'Esgrignons, the Troisvilles, the Casterans, the Nouâtres, and the like.

"At the end of eighteen months this man deserted his wife and vanished in Paris, having changed his name. Madame de la Chanterie could never discover the cause of this separation till the lightning flash showed it in the midst of the storm. Her daughter, whom she had brought up with the greatest care and the purest religious feelings, preserved absolute silence on the subject.

"This lack of confidence was a great shock to Madame de la Chanterie. Many times already she had detected in her daughter certain indications of the father's adventurous spirit, strengthened by an almost manly determination of

character. The husband had departed without let or hindrance, leaving his affairs in the utmost disorder. To this day Madame de la Chanterie is amazed at this catastrophe, which no human power could remedy. All the persons she privately consulted had assured her before the marriage that the young man's fortune was clear and unembarrassed, in land unencumbered by mortgages, when, at that very time, the estate had, for ten years, been loaded with debt far beyond its value. So everything was sold, and the poor young wife, reduced to her own little income, came back to live with her mother.

"Madame de la Chanterie subsequently learned that this man had been kept going by the most respectable persons in the district for their own benefit, for the wretched man owed them all more or less considerable sums of money. Indeed, ever since her arrival in the province, Madame de la Chanterie had been regarded as a prey.

"However, there were other reasons for this climax of disaster, which you will understand from a confidential communication addressed to the Emperor.

"This man had long since succeeded in winning the good graces of the leading Royalists of the Department by his devotion to the cause during the stormiest days of the Revolution. As one of Louis XVIII.'s most active emissaries, he had, since 1793, been mixed up in every conspiracy, always withdrawing at the right moment, and with so much dexterity as to give rise at last to suspicions of his honor. The King dismissed him from service, and he was excluded from all further scheming, so he retired to his estate, already deeply involved. All these antecedents, at that time scarcely known—for those who were initiated into the secrets of the Cabinet did not say much about so dangerous a colleague—made him an object almost of worship in a town devoted to the Bourbons, where the cruelest devices of the Chouans were regarded as honest warfare. The Esgrignons, the Casterans, the Chevalier de Valois, in short, the Aristocracy and the Church, received the Royalist with open arms, and

took him to their bosom. This favorite was supported by his creditors' earnest desire to be paid.

"This wretch, a match for the deceased la Chanterie, was able to keep up this part for three years; he affected the greatest piety, and subjugated his vices. During the first few months of his married life he had some little influence over his wife; he did his utmost to corrupt her by his doctrines, if atheism may be called a doctrine, and by the flippant tone in which he spoke of the most sacred things.

"This backstairs diplomat had, on his return to the country, formed an intimacy with a young man, over head and ears in debt like himself, but attractive, in so far that he had as much courage and honesty as the other had shown hypocrisy and cowardice. This guest at his house—whose charm and character could not fail to impress a young woman, to say nothing of his adventurous career—was a tool in the husband's hands which he used to support his infamous principles. The daughter never confessed to her mother the gulf into which circumstances had thrown her—for human prudence is no word for the caution exercised by Madame de la Chanterie when seeking a husband for her only child. And this last blow, in a life so devoted, so guileless, so religious as hers, tested as she had been by every kind of misfortune, filled Madame de la Chanterie with a distrust of herself which isolated her from her daughter; all the more so because her daughter, in compensation for her ill-fortune, insisted on perfect liberty, overruled her mother, and was sometimes very rough with her.

"Thus wounded in every feeling, cheated alike in her devotion and her love for her husband—to whom she had sacrificed her happiness, her fortune, and her life, without a murmur; cheated in the exclusively religious training she had given her daughter; cheated by the world, even in the matter of that daughter's marriage, and meeting with no justice from the heart in which she had implanted none but right feelings, she turned more resolutely to God, clinging



to Him whose hand lay so heavy on her. She was almost a nun; she went to mass every morning, carried out monastic discipline, and saved in everything to be able to help the poor.

"Has any woman ever known a more saintly or more severely tried life than this noble creature, so mild to the unfortunate, so brave in danger, and always so perfect a Christian?" said the worthy man, appealing to Godefroid. "You know Madame, you know whether she is deficient in sense, judgment, and reflection. She has all these qualities in the highest degree. Well, and still all these misfortunes, which surely were enough to qualify any life as surpassing all others in adversity, were a trifle compared with what God had yet in store for this woman.—We will speak only of Madame de la Chanterie's daughter," said Monsieur Alain, going on with his narrative.

"At the age of eighteen, when she married, Mademoiselle de la Chanterie had an extremely delicate complexion, rather dark, with a brilliant color, a slender form, and charming features. An elegantly formed brow was crowned by the most beautiful black hair, that matched well with bright and lively hazel eyes. A peculiar prettiness and a childlike countenance belied her real nature and masculine decisiveness. She had small hands and feet; in all her person there was something tiny and frail, which excluded any idea of strength and wilfulness. Never having lived away from her mother, her mind was absolutely innocent, and her piety remarkable.

"This young lady, like Madame de la Chanterie, was fanatically devoted to the Bourbons, and hated the Revolution; she regarded Napoleon's empire as a plague inflicted on France by Providence, as a punishment for the crimes of 1793. Such a conformity of opinion between the lady and her son-in-law was, as it always must be in such cases, a conclusive reason in favor of the marriage, in which all the aristocracy of the province took the greatest interest.

"This wretched man's friend had at the time of the re-

bellion in 1799 been the leader of a troop of Chouans. It would seem that the Baron—for Madame de la Chanterie's son-in-law was a Baron—had no object in throwing his wife and his friend together but that of extracting money from them. Though deeply in debt, and without any means of living, the young adventurer lived in very good style, and was able, no doubt, to help the promoter of Royalist conspiracies.

“Here you will need a few words of explanation as to an association which made a great noise in its day,” said Monsieur Alain, interrupting his narrative. “I mean that of the raiders known as the *Chauffeurs*. These brigands pervaded all the western provinces more or less; but their object was not so much pillage as a revival of the Royalist opposition. Advantage was taken of the general resistance of the people to the law of conscription, which, as you know, was enforced with many abuses. Between Mortagne and Rennes, and even beyond, as far as to the Loire, nocturnal raids were frequent, commonly to the injury of those who held national lands. These bands of destroyers were the terror of the country. I am not exaggerating when I tell you that in some Departments the arm of Justice was practically paralyzed. Those last thunders of civil war did not echo so far as you might suppose, accustomed as we now are to the startling publicity given by the press to the most trivial acts of political and private life. The Censor allowed nothing to appear in print that bore on politics, unless it were accomplished fact, and even that was distorted. If you will take the trouble to look through old files of the ‘*Moniteur*’ and other newspapers, even those issued in the western provinces, you will find not a word concerning the four or five great trials which brought sixty or eighty of these rebels to the scaffold. *Brigands*, this was the name given under the Revolution to the Vendéans, the Chouans, and all who took up arms for the House of Bourbon; and it was still given in legal phraseology under the Empire to the Royalists who were victims to sporadic conspiracies. For to some

vehement souls the Emperor and his government were 'the Enemy,' and everything seemed good that was adverse to him.—I am explaining the position, not justifying the opinions, and I will now go on with my story.

"So now," he said, after a pause, such as must occur in a long story, "you must understand that these Royalists were ruined by the war of 1793, though consumed by frantic passions; and if you can conceive of some exceptional natures consumed also by such necessities as those of Madame de la Chanterie's son-in-law and his friend the Chouan leader, you will see how it was that they determined to commit, for their private advantage, acts of robbery which their political opinions would justify, against the Imperial government for the advantage of the Cause.

"The young leader set to work to fan the ashes of the Chouan faction, to be ready to act at an opportune moment. There was, soon after, a terrible crisis in the Emperor's affairs when he was shut up in the island of Lobau, and it seemed that he must inevitably succumb to a simultaneous attack by England and by Austria. The victory of Wagram made the internal rebellion all but abortive. This attempt to revive the fires of civil war in Brittany, la Vendée, and part of Normandy, was unfortunately coincident with the Baron's money difficulties; he had flattered himself that he could contrive a separate expedition, of which the profits could be applied solely to redeem his property. But his wife and friend, with nobler feeling, refused to divert to private uses any sums that might be snatched at the sword's point from the State coffers; these were to be distributed to the rebel conscripts and Chouans, and to purchase weapons and ammunition to arm a general rising.

"At last, when, after heated discussions, the young Chouan, supported by the Baroness, positively refused to retain a hundred thousand francs in silver crowns which was to be seized from one of the Government Receivers' offices in the west to provide for the Royalist forces, the husband disappeared, to escape the execution on his per-



son of several writs that were out against him. The creditors tried to extract payment from his wife, but the wretched man had dried up the spring of affection which prompts a woman to sacrifice herself for her husband.

"All this was kept from poor Madame de la Chanterie, but it was a trifle in comparison with the plot that lay behind this merely preliminary explanation.

"It is too late this evening," said the good man, looking at the clock, "and there is too much still to tell, to allow of my going on with the rest of the story. My old friend Bordin, who was made famous as a Royalist by his share in the great Simeuse trial, and who pleaded in the case of the *Chauffeurs* of Mortagne, gave me when I came to live here two documents which, as he died not long after, I still have in my possession. You will there find the facts set forth much more concisely than I could give them. The details are so complicated that I should lose myself in trying to state them, and it would take me more than two hours, while in these papers you will find them summarized. To-morrow morning I will tell you what remains to be told concerning Madame de la Chanterie, for when you have read these documents you will be sufficiently informed for me to conclude my tale in a few words."

He placed some papers, yellow with years, in Godefroid's hands. After bidding his neighbor good-night, the young man retired to his room, and before he went to sleep read the two documents here reproduced:

#### "BILL OF INDICTMENT

*"Court of Criminal and Special Justice for the Department of the Orne*

"The Public Prosecutor to the Imperial Court of Justice at Caen, appointed to carry out his functions to the Special Criminal Court sitting by the Imperial decree of September, 1809, in the town of Alençon, sets forth to the Court the following facts, as proved by the preliminary proceedings, to wit:

"That a conspiracy of brigands, hatched for a long time with extraordinary secrecy, and connected with a scheme for a general rising in the western departments, has vented itself in several attempts on the lives and property of citizens, and more especially in the attack with robbery, under arms, on a vehicle conveying, on the — of May, 18—, the Government moneys collected at Caen. This attack, recalling in its details the memories of the civil war now so happily at an end, showed deep-laid designs of a degree of villainy which cannot be excused by the vehemence of passion.

"From its inception to the end, the plot is extremely complicated, and the details numerous. The preliminary examinations lasted for more than a year, but the evidence forthcoming at every stage of the crime throws full light on the preparations made, on its execution, and results.

"The first idea of the plot was conceived of by one Charles-Amédée-Louis-Joseph Rifoël, calling himself the Chevalier du Vissard, born at le Vissard, a hamlet of Saint-Mexme by Ernée, and formerly a leader of the rebels.

"This man, who was pardoned by His Majesty the Emperor at the time of the general peace and amnesty, and whose ingratitude to his sovereign has shown itself in fresh crimes, has already suffered the extreme penalty of the law as the punishment for his misdeeds; but it is necessary here to refer to some of his actions, as he had great influence over some of the accused now awaiting the verdict of justice, and he is concerned in every circumstance of the case.

"This dangerous agitator, who bore an alias, as is common with these rebels, and was known as *Pierrot*, used to wander about the western provinces enlisting partisans for a fresh rebellion; but his safest lurking-place was the chateau of Saint-Savin, the home of a woman named Lechantre and her daughter named Bryond, a house in the hamlet of Saint-Savin and in the district of Mortagne. This spot is famous in the most horrible annals of the rebellion of 1799. It was there that a courier was murdered and his chaise plundered by a band of brigands under the command of a

woman, helped by the notorious Marche-à-Terre. Hence brigandage may be said to be endemic in this neighborhood.

"An intimacy for which we seek no name had existed for more than a year between the woman Bryond and the above-named Rifoel.

"It was close to this spot that, in the month of April, 1808, an interview took place between Rifoel and one Boislaurier, a superior leader, known in the more serious risings in the west by the name of Auguste, and he it was who was the moving spirit of the rising now under the consideration of the Court.

"This obscure point, namely, the connection of these two leaders, is plainly proved by the evidence of numerous witnesses, and also stands as a demonstrated fact by the sentence of death carried out on Rifoel. From the time of that meeting, Boislaurier and Rifoel agreed to act in concert.

"They communicated to each other, and at first to no one else, their atrocious purpose, founded on His Royal and Imperial Majesty's absence, in command, at the time, of his forces in Spain; and then, or soon after, they must have plotted to capture the State moneys in transit, as the base for further operations.

"Some time later, one Dubut of Caen despatched a messenger to the chateau of Saint-Savin, namely, one Hiley, known as le Laboureur, long known as a robber of the diligences; he was charged with information as to trustworthy accomplices. And it was thus, by Hiley's intervention, that the plot secured the co-operation from the first of one Herbomez, called Général-Hardi, a pardoned rebel of the same stamp as Rifoel, and, like him, a traitor to the amnesty.

"Herbomez and Hiley recruited in the neighboring villages seven banditti, whose names must at once be set forth as follows:

"1. Jean Cibot, called Pille-Miche, one of the boldest brigands of a troop got together by Montauran in the year VII., and one of the actors in the robbery and murder of the Mortagne courier.



"2. François Lisieux, known as Grand-Fils, a rebel-conscript of the department of the Mayenne.

"3. Charles Grenier, or Fleur-de-Genet, a deserter from the 69th half-brigade.

"4. Gabriel Bruce, known as Gros-Jean, one of the fiercest Chouans of Fontaine's division.

"5. Jacques Horeau, called Stuart, ex-lieutenant of that brigade, one of Tinténia's adherents, and well known by the share he took in the Quiberon expedition.

"6. Marie-Anne Cabot, called Lajeunesse, formerly huntsman to the Sieur Carol of Alençon.

"7. Louis Minard, a rebel-conscript.

"These, when enrolled, were quartered in three different hamlets in the houses of Binet, Mélin, and Laravinière, inn or tavern-keepers, all devoted to Rifoel.

"The necessary weapons were at once provided by one Jean-François Léveillé, a notary, and the incorrigible abettor of the brigands, serving as a go-between for them with several leaders in hiding; and, in this town, by one Felix Courceuil, called le Confesseur, formerly surgeon to the rebel army of la Vendée; both these men are natives of Alençon. Eleven muskets were concealed in a house belonging to Bryond in a suburb of Alençon; but this was done without his knowledge, for he was at that time living in the country on his estate between Alençon and Mortagne.

"When Bryond left his wife to go her own way in the fatal road she had set out on, these muskets, cautiously removed from the house, were carried by the woman Bryond in her own carriage to the chateau of Saint-Savin.

"It was then that the Department of the Orne and adjacent districts were dismayed by acts of highway robbery that startled the authorities as much as the inhabitants of those districts which had so long enjoyed quiet; and these raids prove that the atrocious foes of the Government and the Empire had been kept informed of the secret coalition of 1809 by means of communications from abroad.

"Léveillé the notary, the woman Bryond, Dubut of Caen,

Herbomez of Mayenne, Boislaurier of le Mans, and Rifoel were the ringleaders of the association, which was also joined by those criminals who have been already executed under the sentence passed on them with Rifoel, by those accused under this trial, and by several others who have escaped public vengeance by flight, or by the silence of their accomplices.

"It was Dubut who, as a resident near Caen, gave notice to Lèveillé of the despatch of the money. Dubut made several journeys between Caen and Mortagne, and Lèveillé also was often on the roads. It may here be noted that, at the time when the arms were moved, Lèveillé, who came to visit Bruce, Grenier, and Cibot at Mélin's house, found them arranging the muskets in an inside shed, and helped them himself in doing so.

"A general meeting was arranged to take place at Mortagne at the Ecu de France inn. All the accused were present in various disguises. It was on this occasion that Lèveillé, the woman Bryond, Dubut, Herbomez, Boislaurier, and Hiley, the cleverest of the subordinate conspirators, of whom Cibot is the most daring, secured the co-operation of one Vauthier, called Vieux-Chene, formerly a servant to the notorious Longuy, and now a stableman at the inn. Vauthier agreed to give the woman Bryond due notice of the passing of the chaise conveying the Government moneys, as it commonly stopped to bait at the inn.

"The opportunity ere long offered for assembling the brigand recruits who had been scattered about in various lodgings with great precaution, sometimes in one village, and sometimes in another, under the care of Courceuil and of Lèveillé. The assembly was managed by the woman Bryond, who afforded the brigands a new hiding-place in the uninhabited parts of the chateau of Saint-Savin, at a few miles from Mortagne, where she had lived with her mother since her husband's departure. The brigands established themselves there with Hiley at their head, and

spent several days there. The woman Bryond, with her waiting-maid Godard, took care to prepare with her own hands everything needed for lodging and feeding these guests. To this end she had trusses of hay brought in, and went to see the brigands in the shelter she had arranged for them, going to and fro with Lèveillé. Provisions and victuals were procured under the orders and care of Courceuil, who took his orders from Rifoel and Boislaurier.

"The principal feat was decided on and the men fully armed; the brigands stole out of Saint-Savin every night; pending the transit of the Government chest, they carried out raids in the neighborhood, and the whole country was in terror under their repeated incursions. There can be no doubt that the robberies committed at la Sartinière, at Vonay, and at the chateau of Saint-Seny were the work of this band; their daring equalled their villany, and they contrived to terrify their victims so effectually that no tales were told, so that justice could obtain no evidence.

"While levying contributions on all who held possession of the nationalized land, the brigands carefully reconnoitred the woods of Le Chesnay, which they had chosen to be the scene of their crime.

"Not far away is the village of Louvigny, where there is an inn kept by the brothers Chaussard, formerly game-keepers on the property of Troisville, and this was to be the brigands' final rendezvous. The two brothers knew beforehand the part they were to play; Courceuil and Boislaurier had long before sounded them, and revived their hatred of the government of our august Emperor; and had told them that among the visitors who would drop in on them would be some men of their acquaintance—the formidable Hiley and the not less formidable Cibot.

"In fact, on the 6th the seven highwaymen, under the leadership of Hiley, arrived at the brother Chaussards' inn and spent two days there. On the 8th the chief led out his men, saying they were going three leagues away, and he desired the innkeepers to provide food, which was taken to



a place where the roads met, a little way from the village. Hiley came home alone at night.

"Two riders—who were probably the woman Bryond and Rifoël, for it is said that she accompanied him in his expeditions, on horseback, and dressed as a man—arrived that evening and conversed with Hiley. On the following day Hiley wrote to Léveillé the notary, and one of the Chaussard brothers carried the letter and brought back the answer. Two hours later Bryond and Rifoel came on horseback to speak with Hiley.

"The upshot of all these interviews and coming and going was that a hatchet was indispensable to break open the cases. The notary went back with the woman Bryond to Saint-Savin, where they sought in vain for a hatchet.

"Thereupon he returned to the inn and met Hiley half-way, to whom he was to explain that no hatchet was to be found. Hiley made his way back and ordered supper at the inn for ten persons; he then brought in the seven brigands all armed. Hiley made them pile arms like soldiers. They all sat down and supped in haste, Hiley ordering a quantity of food to be packed for them to take away with them. Then he led the elder Chaussard aside and asked him for a hatchet. The innkeeper, much astonished, by his own account, refused to give him one. Courceuil and Boislaurier presently came in, and the three men spent the whole night pacing up and down the room and discussing their plan. Courceuil, nicknamed the Confessor, the most cunning of the band, took possession of a hatchet, and at about two in the morning they all went out by different doors.

"Every minute was now precious; the execution of the crime was fixed for that day. Hiley, Courceuil, and Boislaurier placed their men. Hiley, with Minard, Cabot, and Bruce, formed an ambush to the right of the wood of Le Chesnay. Boislaurier, Grenier, and Horeau occupied the centre. Courceuil, Herboomez, and Lisieux stood by the

ravine under the fringe of the wood. All these positions are indicated on the subjoined plan to scale, drawn by the surveyor to the Government.

"The chaise, meanwhile, had started from Mortagne at about one in the morning, driven by one Rousseau, who was so far inculcated by circumstantial evidence as to make it seem desirable to arrest him. The vehicle, driving slowly, would reach the wood of Le Chesnay by about three. It was guarded by a single gendarme; the men were to breakfast at Donnery. There were three travellers as it happened besides the gendarme.

"The driver, who had been walking with them very slowly, on reaching the bridge of Le Chesnay, whipped up the horses to a speed and energy that the others remarked upon, and turned into a crossroad known as the Senzey road. The chaise was soon lost to sight; the way it had gone was known to the gendarme and his companions only by the sound of the horses' bells; the men had to run to come up with it. Then they heard a shout: 'Stand, you rascals!'—and four shots were fired.

"The gendarme, who was not hit, drew his sword and ran on in the direction he supposed the driver to have taken. He was stopped by four men, who all fired; his eagerness saved him, for he rushed past to desire one of the young travellers to run on and have the alarm bell tolled at Le Chesnay, but two of the brigands took steady aim, advancing toward him; he was forced to draw back a few steps; and just as he was about to turn the wood, he received a ball in the left armpit, which broke his arm; he fell, and found himself completely disabled.

"The shouting and shots had been heard at Donnery. The officer in command at this station hurried up with one of his gendarmes; a running fire led them away to the side of the wood furthest from the scene of the robbery. The single gendarme tried to intimidate the brigands by a hue and cry, and to delude them into the belief that a force was at hand.

“‘Forward!’ he cried. ‘First platoon to the right! now we have them! Second platoon to the left!’

“The brigands on their side shouted: ‘Draw! This way, comrades! Send up the men as fast as you can!’

“The noise of firing hindered the officer from hearing the cries of the wounded gendarme, and helping in the manœuvre by which the other was keeping the robbers in check; but he could hear a clatter close at hand, arising from splitting the cases open. He advanced toward that side; four armed men took aim at him, and he called out, ‘Surrender, villains!’

“They only replied, ‘Stand, or you are a dead man!’

“He rushed forward; two muskets were fired, and he was hit, one ball going through his left leg and into his horses’ flank. The brave man, bleeding profusely, was forced to retire from the unequal struggle, shouting, but in vain, ‘Help—come on—the brigands are at Le Chesnay.’

“The robbers, left masters of the field by superiority of numbers, pillaged the chaise which had been intentionally driven into a ravine. They blindfolded the driver, but this was only a feint. The chests were forced open, and bags of money strewed the ground. The horses were unharnessed and loaded with the coin. Three thousand francs’ worth of copper money was scornfully left behind; three hundred thousand francs were carried off on four horses. They made for the village of Menneville adjacent to the town of Saint-Savin.

“The horde and their booty stopped at a solitary house belonging to the Chaussard brothers, inhabited by their uncle, one Bourget, who had been in their confidence from the first. This old man, helped by his wife, received the brigands, warned them to be silent, unloaded the beasts, and then fetched up some wine. The wife remained on sentry by the chateau. The old man led the horses back to the wood and returned them to the driver; then he released the two young men who had been gagged as well as the accommodating driver. After refreshing themselves



in great haste, the brigands went on their way. Courceuil, Hiley, and Boislaurier reviewed their party, and after bestowing on each a trifling recompense, sent off the men, each in a different direction.

"On reaching a spot called le Champ-Landry, these malefactors, obeying the prompting which so often leads such wretches into blunders and miscalculations, threw their muskets away into a field of standing corn. The fact that all three did so at the same time is a crowning proof of their collusion. Then, terrified by the boldness and success of their crime, they separated.

"The robbery having been committed, with the additional features of violence and attempt to murder, the chain of subsidiary events was already in preparation, and other actors were implicated in receiving and disposing of the stolen property. Rifoel, hidden in Paris, whence he pulled all the wires of the plot, sent an order to Léveillé to forward to him immediately fifty thousand francs. Courceuil, apt at the management of such felonies, had sent off Hiley to inform Léveillé of their success and of his arrival at Mortagne, where the notary at once joined him.

"Vauthier, to whose fidelity they believed they might trust, undertook to find the Chaussards' uncle; he went to the house, but was told by the old man that he must apply to the nephews, who had given over large sums to the woman Bryond. However, he bid Vauthier wait for him on the road, and he there gave him a bag containing twelve hundred francs, which Vauthier took to the woman Lechantre for her daughter.

"By Léveillé's advice Courceuil then went to Bourget, who sent him direct to his nephews. The elder Chaussard led Vauthier to the wood and showed him a tree beneath which a bag of a thousand francs was found buried. In short, Léveillé, Hiley, and Vauthier went to and fro several times, and each time obtained a small sum, trifling in comparison with the whole amount stolen.

"These moneys were handed over to the woman Le-

chantre at Mortagne; and, in obedience to a letter from her daughter, she carried them to Saint-Savin, whither the said Bryond had returned.

"It is not immediately necessary to inquire whether this woman Lechantre had any previous knowledge of the plot. For the present it need only be noted that she had left Mortagne to go to Saint-Savin the day before the crime was committed, in order to fetch away her daughter; that the two women met half-way, and returned to Mortagne; that, on the following day, the notary, being informed of this by Hiley, went from Alençon to Mortagne, and straight to their house, where he persuaded them to transport the money, obtained with so much difficulty from the Chaus-sards and from Bourget, to a certain house in Alençon, presently to be mentioned as belonging to one Pannier, a merchant there. The woman Lechantre wrote to the man in charge at Saint-Savin to come to Mortagne and escort her and her daughter by crossroads to Alençon. The money, amounting to twenty thousand francs in all, was packed into a vehicle at night, the girl Godard helping to dispose of it.

"The notary had planned the way they were to travel. They reached an inn kept by one of their allies, a man named Louis Chargegrain, in the hamlet of Littray. But in spite of the notary's precautions—he riding ahead of the chaise—some strangers were present and saw the portman-teaus and bags taken out which contained the coin.

"But just as Courceuil and Hiley, disguised as women, were consulting, in the market-place at Alençon, with the aforementioned Pannier—who since 1794 had been the rebels' treasurer, and who was devoted to Rifoel—as to the best means of transmitting the required sum to Rifoel, the terror occasioned by the arrests and inquiries already made was so great that the woman Lechantre, in her alarm, set off at night from the inn where they were, and fled with her daughter by country byways, leaving Léveillé behind, and took refuge in the hiding-places known to them in the

chateau of Saint-Savin. The same alarm came over the other criminals. Courceuil, Boislaurier, and his relation Dubut exchanged two thousand francs in silver for gold at a dealer's, and fled across Brittany to England.

"On arriving at Saint-Savin, the mother and daughter heard that Bourget was arrested with the driver and the runaway conscripts.

"The magistrates, the police, and the authorities acted with so much decision that it was deemed necessary to protect the woman Bryond from their investigations, for all these felons were devotedly attached to her, and she had won them all. So she was removed from Saint-Savin, and hid at first at Alençon, where her adherents held council and succeeded in concealing her in Pannier's cellars.

"Hereupon fresh incidents occurred. After the arrest of Bourget and his wife, the Chaussards refused to give up any more money, saying they had been betrayed. This unexpected defection fell out at the very moment when all the conspirators were in the greatest need of supplies, if only as a means of escape. Rifoel was thirsting for money. Hiley, Cibot, and Léveillé now began to doubt the honesty of the two Chaussards. This led to a fresh complication which seems to demand the intervention of the law.

"Two gendarmes, commissioned to discover the woman Bryond, succeeded in getting into Pannier's house, where they were present at a council held by the criminals; but these men, false to the confidence placed in them, instead of arresting Bryond, were enslaved by her charms. These rascally soldiers—named Ratel and Mallet—showed the woman every form of interest and devotion, and offered to escort her to the Chaussards' inn and compel them to make restitution. The woman went off on horseback, dressed as a man, and accompanied by Ratel, Mallet, and the maid-servant Godard. She set out at night, and on reaching the inn she and one of the Chaussard brothers had a private but animated interview. She had a pistol, and was resolved to blow her accomplice's brains out in case of his refusal; in



fact, he led her to the wood, and she brought back a heavy sack. In it she found copper coin and twelve-sou pieces to the value of fifteen hundred francs.

"It was then suggested that as many of the conspirators as could be got together should take the Chaussards by surprise, seize them, and put them to torture. Pannier, on hearing of this disappointment, flew into a rage and broke out in threats; and though the woman Bryond threatened him in return with Rifoel's vengeance, she was compelled to fly. All these facts were confessed by Ratel.

"Mallet, touched by her position, offered the woman Bryond a place of shelter; they all set off together and spent the night in the wood of Troisville. Then Mallet and Ratel, with Hiley and Cibot, went by night to the Chaussards' inn, but they found that the brothers had left the place, and that the remainder of the money had certainly been removed. This was the last attempt on the part of the conspirators to recover the stolen money.

"It is now important to define more accurately the part played by each of the criminals implicated in this affair.

"Dubut, Boislaurier, Gentil, Herbomez, Courceuil, and Hiley are all leaders, some in council, and some in action. Boislaurier, Dubut, and Courceuil, all three contumacious deserters, are habitual rebels, stirring up troubles, the implacable foes of Napoleon the Great, of his successes, his dynasty, and his government, of our new code of laws and of the Imperial constitution. Herbomez and Hiley, as their right-hand men, boldly carried out what the three others planned. The guilt of the seven instruments of the crime is beyond question—Cibot, Lisieux, Grenier, Bruce, Horeau, Cabot and Minard. It is proved by the depositions of those who are now in the hands of justice: Lisieux died during the preliminary inquiry, and Bruce has evaded capture.

"The conduct of the chaise-driver Rousseau marks him as an accomplice. The slow progress on the highroad, the pace to which he flogged the horses on reaching the wood, his persistent statement that his head was muffled, whereas,

by the evidence of the young fellow-travellers, the leader of the brigands had the handkerchief removed and ordered him to recognize the men—all contribute to afford presumptive evidence of his collusion.

"As to the woman Bryond and Léveillé the notary, their complicity was constant and continuous from the first. They supplied funds and means for the crime; they knew of it and abetted it. Léveillé was constantly travelling to and fro. The woman Bryond invented plot upon plot; she risked everything—even her life—to secure the money. She lent her house, her carriage, and was concerned in the plot from the beginning, nor did she attempt to persuade the chief leader to desist from it when she might have exerted her evil influence to hinder it. She led the maidservant Godard into its toils. Léveillé was so entirely mixed up in it that it was he who tried to procure the hatchet needed by the robbers.

"The woman Bourget, Vauthier, the Chaussards, Pannier, the woman Lechantre, Mallet, and Ratel were all incriminated in various degrees, as also the innkeepers Mélin, Binet, Laravinière, and Chargegrain.

"Bourget died during the preliminary inquiry, after making a confession which leaves no doubt as to the part taken by Vauthier and the woman Bryond; and though he tried to mitigate the charge against his wife and his nephews the Chaussards, the reasons for his reticence are self-evident.

"But the Chaussards certainly knew that they were supplying provisions to highway robbers; they saw that the men were armed and were informed of all their scheme; they allowed them to take the hatchet needed for breaking open the chests, knowing the purpose for which it was required. Finally, they received wittingly the money obtained by the robbery, they hid it, and in fact made away with the greater part of it.

"Pannier, formerly treasurer to the rebel party, concealed the woman Bryond; he is one of the most dangerous participators in the plot, of which he was informed from its

origin. With regard to him we are in the dark as to some circumstances as yet unknown, but of which justice will take cognizance. He is Rifoel's immediate ally and in all the secrets of the ante-revolutionary party in the West; he greatly regretted the fact that Rifoel should have admitted the women into the plot or have trusted them at all. He forwarded money to Rifoel and received the stolen coin.

"As to the two gendarmes, Ratel and Mallet, their conduct deserves the utmost rigor of the law. They were traitors to their duty. One of them, foreseeing his fate, committed suicide after making some important revelations. The other, Mallet, denied nothing, and his confession removes all doubt.

"The woman Lechantre, in spite of her persistent denials, was informed of everything. The hypocrisy of this woman, who attempts to shelter her professed innocence under the practice of assumed devotion, is known by her antecedents to be prompt and intrepid in extremities. She asserts that she was deceived by her daughter, and believed that the money in question belonged to the man Bryond. The trick is too transparent. If Bryond had had any money he would not have fled from the neighborhood to avoid witnessing his own ruin. Lechantre considered that there was no harm in the robbery when it was approved of by her ally Boislaurier. But how, then, does she account for Rifoel's presence at Saint-Savin, her daughter's expeditions and connection with the man, and the visit of the brigands who were waited on by the woman Godard and Bryond? She says she sleeps heavily, and is in the habit of going to bed at seven o'clock, and did not know what answer to make when the examining judge observed that then she must rise at daybreak, and could not have failed to discern traces of the plot and of the presence of so many men, or to be uneasy about her daughter's nocturnal expeditions. To this she could only say that she was at her prayers.

"The woman is a model hypocrite. In fact, her absence on the day when the crime was committed, the care she took



to remove her daughter to Mortagne, her journey with the money, and her precipitate flight when everything was discovered, the care with which she hid herself, and the circumstances of her arrest, all prove her complicity from an early stage of the affair. Her conduct was not that of a mother anxious to explain the danger to her daughter and to save her from it, but that of a terrified accomplice; and she was an accessory, not out of foolish affection, but from party spirit inspired by hatred, as is well known, for his Imperial Majesty's government. Maternal weakness indeed could not excuse her, and it must not be forgotten that consent, long premeditated, is an evident sign of her complicity.

"Not the crime alone, but its moving spirits, are now known. We see in it the monstrous combination of the delirium of faction with a thirst for rapine; murder prompted by party spirit, under which men take shelter, and justify themselves for the most disgraceful excesses. The orders of the leaders gave the signal for the robbery of State moneys to pay for subsequent violence; base and ferocious hirelings were found to do it for wretched pay, and fully prepared to murder; while the agitators to rebellion, not less guilty, helped in dividing and concealing the booty. What society can allow such attempts to go unpunished? The law has no adequate punishment.

"The Bench of this Criminal and Special Court, then, will be called upon to decide whether the aforementioned Herbomez, Hiley, Cibot, Grenier, Horeau, Cabot, Minard, Mélin, Binet, Laravinière, Rousseau, the woman Bryond, Léveillé, the woman Bourget, Vauthier, the elder Chausard, Pannier, the widow Lechantre, and Mallet—all hereinbefore described and in presence of the Court, and the aforementioned Boislaurier, Dubut, Courceuil, Bruce, Chausard the younger, Chargegrain, and the girl Godard, being absent or having fled, are or are not guilty of the acts described in this bill of indictment.

"Given in to the Court at Caen the 1st of December, 180—  
(Signed) BARON BOURLAC."

This legal document, much shorter and more peremptory than such bills of indictment are in these days, so full of detail and so complete on every point, especially as to the previous career of the accused, excited Godefroid to the utmost. The bare, dry style of an official pen, setting forth, in red ink as it were, the principal facts of the case, was enough to set his imagination working. Concise, reserved narrative is to some minds a problem in which they lose themselves in exploring the mysterious depths.

In the dead of night, stimulated by the silence, by the darkness, by the dreadful connection hinted at by Monsieur Alain of this document with Madame de la Chanterie, Godefroid concentrated all his intelligence on the consideration of this terrible affair.

The name of Lechantre was evidently the first name of the la Chanterie family, whose aristocratic titular name had of course been curtailed under the Republic and the Empire.

His fancy painted the scenery where the drama was played out, and the figures of the accomplices rose before him. Imagination showed him, not indeed "the aforementioned Rifoel," but the Chevalier du Vissard, a youth resembling Walter Scott's Fergus—in short, a French edition of the Jacobite. He worked out a romance on the passion of a young girl grossly betrayed by her husband's infamy—a tragedy then very fashionable—and in love with a young leader rebelling against the Emperor; rushing headlong, like Diana Vernon, into the toils of a conspiracy, fired with enthusiasm, and then, having started on the perilous descent, unable to check her wild career.—Had she ended it on the scaffold?

A whole world seemed to rise before Godefroid. He was wandering through the groves of Normandy; he could see the Breton gentleman and Madame Bryond in the copse; he dwelt in the old chateau of Saint-Savin; he pictured the winning over of so many conspirators—the notary, the merchant, and the bold Chouan leaders. He could understand the almost unanimous adhesion of a district where the mem-

ory was still fresh of the famous Marche-à-Terre, of the Comtes de Bauvan and de Lunguy, of the massacre at la Vivetière, and of the death of the Marquis de Montauran, of whose exploits he had heard from Madame de la Chanterie.

This vision, as it were, of men and things and places, was but brief. As he realized the fact that this story was that of the noble and pious old lady whose virtues affected him to the point of a complete metamorphosis, Godefroid, with a thrill of awe, took up the second document given to him by Monsieur Alain, which bore the title—

"AN APPEAL ON BEHALF OF MADAME HENRIETTE BRYOND DES TOURS-MINIÈRES, *nee* LECHANTRE DE LA CHANTERIE."

"That settles it," thought Godefroid.

The paper ran as follows:

"We are condemned and guilty; but if ever the Sovereign had cause to exercise his prerogative of mercy, would it not be under the circumstances herein set forth?

"The culprit is a young woman, who says she is a mother, and is condemned to death.

"On the threshold of the prison, and in view of the scaffold, this woman will tell the truth. That statement will be in her favor, and to that she looks for pardon.

"The case, tried in the Criminal Court of Alençon, presents some obscure features, as do all cases where several accused persons have combined in a plot inspired by party feeling.

"His Imperial and Kingly Majesty's Privy Council are now fully informed as to the identity of a mysterious personage, known as *le Marchand*, whose presence in the department of the Orne was not disputed by the public authorities in the course of the trial, though the pleader for the Crown did not think it advisable to produce him in Court, and the defendants had no right to call him, nor, indeed, power to produce him.



"This man, as is well known to the Bench, to the local authorities, to the Paris police, and to the Imperial and Royal Council, is Bernard-Polydor Bryond de la Tour-Minières, who, since 1794, has been in correspondence with the Comte de Lille; he is known abroad as the Baron des Tours-Minières, and in the records of the Paris police as Contenson.

"He is a very exceptional man, whose youth and rank were stained by unremitting vice, such utter immorality and such criminal excesses, that so infamous a life would inevitably have ended on the scaffold but for the skill with which he played a double part under shelter of his two names. Still, as he is more and more the slave of his passions and insatiable necessities, he will at last fall below infamy, and find himself in the lowest depths, in spite of indisputable gifts and an extraordinary mind.

"When the Comte de Lille's better judgment led to his forbidding Bryond to draw money from abroad, the man tried to get out of the blood-stained field on to which his necessities had led him. Was it that this career no longer paid him well enough? Or was it remorse or shame that led the man back to the district where his estates, loaded with debt when he went away, could have but little to yield even to his skill? This it is impossible to believe. It seems more probable that he had some mission to fulfil in those departments where some sparks were still lingering of the civil broils.

"When wandering through the provinces, where his perfidious adhesion to the schemes of the English and of the Comte de Lille gained him the confidence of certain families still attached to the party that the genius of our immortal Emperor has reduced to silence, he met one of the former leaders of the Rebellion—a man with whom he had had dealings as an envoy from abroad at the time of the Quiberon expedition, during the last rising in the year VII. He encouraged the hopes of this agitator, who has since paid the penalty of his treasonable plots on the scaffold. At

that time, then, Bryond was able to learn all the secrets of the incorrigible faction who misprize the glory of His Majesty the Emperor Napoleon I., and the true interests of the country as represented by his sacred person.

"At the age of five-and-thirty, this man, who affected the deepest piety, who professed unbounded devotion to the interests of the Comte de Lille, and perfect adoration for the rebels of the West who perished in the struggle, who skilfully disguised the ravages of a youth of debauchery, and whose personal appearance was in his favor, came, under the protection of his creditors, who told no tales, and of the most extraordinary good-nature on the part of all the *ci-devants* of the district, to be introduced with all these claims on her regard to the woman Lechantre, who was supposed to have a very fine fortune. The scheme in view was to secure a marriage between Madame Lechantre's only daughter, Henriette, and this *protege* of the Royalist party.

"Priests, ex-nobles, and creditors, all from different motives, conspired to promote the marriage between Bernard Bryond and Henriette Lechantre.

"The good judgment of the notary who took charge of Madame Lechantre's affairs, and his shrewd suspicions, led perhaps to the poor girl's undoing. For Monsieur Chesnel, a notary of Alençon, settled the lands of Saint-Savin, the bride's sole estate, on her and her children, reserving a small charge on it and the right of residence to the mother for life.

"Bryond's creditors, who, judging from her methodical and economical style of living, had supposed that Madame Lechantre must have saved large sums, were disappointed in their hopes, and believing that she must be avaricious, they sued Bryond, and this led to a revelation of his imppecuniosity and difficulties.

"Then the husband and wife quarrelled violently, and the young woman came to full knowledge of the dissipated habits, the atheistical opinions both in religion and in politics, nay, I may say, the utter infamy, of the man to whom fate had irrevocably bound her. Then Bryond, being

obliged to let his wife into the secret of the atrocious plots against the Imperial Government, offered an asylum under his roof to Rifoel du Vissard.

"Rifoel's character, adventurous, brave, and lavish, had an extraordinary charm for all who came under his influence; of this there is abundant proof in the cases tried in no less than three special criminal courts.

"The irresistible influence, in fact the absolute power, he acquired over a young woman who found herself at the bottom of a gulf, is only too evident in the catastrophe of which the horror brings her as a suppliant to the foot of the throne. And His Imperial and Kingly Majesty's Council will have no difficulty in verifying the infamous collusion of Bryond, who, far from doing his duty as the guide and adviser of the girl intrusted to his care by the mother he had deceived, condoned and encouraged the intimacy between his wife Henriette and the rebel leader.

"This was the plan imagined by this detestable man, who makes it his glory that he respects nothing, and that he never considers any end but the gratification of his passions, while he regards every sentiment based on social or religious morality as a mere vulgar prejudice. And it may here be remarked that such scheming is habitual to a man who has been playing a double part ever since 1794, who for eight years has deceived the Comte de Lille and his adherents, probably deceiving at the same time the superior police of the Empire—for such men are always ready to serve the highest bidder.

"Bryond, then, was urging Rifoel to commit a crime; he it was who insisted on an armed attack and highway robbery of the State treasure in transit, and on heavy contributions to be extorted from the purchasers of the national land, by means of atrocious tortures which he invented, and which carried terror into five Departments. He demanded no less than three hundred thousand francs to pay off the mortgages on his property.

"In the event of any objection on the part of Rifoel or



Madame Bryond, he intended to revenge himself for the contempt he had inspired in his wife's upright mind, by handing them both over to be dealt with by the law as soon as they should commit some capital crime.

"As soon as he perceived that party spirit was a stronger motive than self-interest in these two whom he had thus thrown together, he disappeared; he came to Paris, armed with ample information as to the state of affairs in the western departments.

"The Chaussard brothers and Vauthier were, it is well known, in constant correspondence with Bryond.

"As soon as the robbery on the chests from Caen was accomplished, Bryond, assuming the name of le Marchand, opened secret communications with the préfet and the magistrates. What was the consequence? No conspiracy of equal extent, and in which so many persons in such different grades of the social scale were involved, has ever been so immediately divulged to justice as this, of which the first attempt was the robbery of the treasure from Caen. Within six days of the crime, all the guilty parties had been watched and followed with a certainty that betrays perfect knowledge of the persons in question, and of their plans. The arrest, trial, and execution of Rifoel and his companions are a sufficient proof, and mentioned here only to demonstrate our knowledge of this fact, of which the Supreme Council knows every particular.

"If ever a condemned criminal might hope for the clemency of the Sovereign, may not Henriette Lechantre?

"Carried away by a passion and by rebellious principles imbibed with her mother's milk, she is, no doubt, unpardonable in the eye of the law; but in the sight of our most magnanimous Emperor, may not the most shameless betrayal on one hand, and the most vehement enthusiasm on the other, plead her cause?

"The greatest of Generals, the immortal genius who pardoned the Prince of Hatzfeld, and who, like God Himself, can divine the arguments suggested by a blind passion,

may, perhaps, vouchsafe to consider the temptations invincible in the young, which may palliate her crime, great as it is.

"Twenty-two heads have already fallen under the sword of justice and the sentence of the three courts. One alone remains—that of a young woman of twenty, not yet of age. Will not the Emperor Napoleon the Great grant her time for repentance? Is not that a tribute to the grace of God?

"For Henriette Lechantre, wife of Bryond des Tours-Minières,

"BORDIN,

"Retained for the defence, Advocate in the Lower Court of the Department of the Seine."

This terrible tragedy haunted the little sleep Godefroid was able to get. He dreamed of decapitation, as the physician Guillotin perfected it with philanthropic intentions. Through the hot vapors of a nightmare he discerned a beautiful young woman, full of enthusiasm, undergoing the last preparations, drawn in a cart, and mounting the scaffold with a cry of "Vive le Roi!"

Godefroid was goaded by curiosity. He rose at day-break, dressed, and paced his room, till at length he posted himself at the window, and mechanically stared at the sky, reconstructing the drama, as a modern romancer might, in several volumes. And always against the murky background of Chouans, of country folk, of provincial gentlemen, of rebel leaders, police agents, lawyers and spies, he saw the radiant figures of the mother and daughter; of the daughter deceiving her mother, the victim of a wretch, and of her mad passion for one of those daring adventurers who were afterward regarded as heroes—a man who, to Godefroid's imagination, had points of resemblance to Georges Cadoudal and Charette, and the giants of the struggle between the Republic and the Monarchy.

As soon as Godefroid heard old Alain stirring, he went to his room; but on looking in through the half-opened

door, he shut it again, and withdrew. The old man, kneeling on his prie-Dieu, was saying his morning prayers. The sight of that white head bent in an attitude of humble piety recalled Godefroid to a sense of duty, and he prayed, too, with fervency.

"I was expecting you," said the good man when, at the end of a quarter of an hour, Godefroid entered his room. "I anticipated your impatience, and rose earlier than usual."

"Madame Henriette?" Godefroid began, with evident agitation.

"Was Madame's daughter," replied Alain, interrupting him. "Madame's name is Lechantre de la Chanterie. Under the Empire old titles were not recognized, nor the names added to the patronymic or first surname. Thus the Baronne des Tours-Minières was 'the woman Bryond'; the Marquis d'Esgrignon was called Carol—Citizen Carol, and afterward the Sieur Carol; the Troisvilles were the Sieurs Guibelin."

"But what was the end? Did the Emperor pardon her?"

"No, alas!" said Alain. "The unhappy little woman perished on the scaffold at the age of twenty-one.—After reading Bordin's petition, the Emperor spoke to the Supreme Judge much to this effect:

"'Why make an example of a spy? A secret agent ceases to be a man, and ought to have none of a man's feelings; he is but a wheel in the machine. Bryond did his duty. If our instruments of that kind were not what they are—steel bars, intelligent only in behalf of the Government they serve—government would be impossible. The sentences of Special Criminal Courts must be carried out, or my magistrates would lose all confidence in themselves and in me. And besides, the men who fought for these people are executed, and they were less guilty than their leaders. The women of the western provinces must be taught not to meddle in conspiracies. It is because the victim of the sentence is a woman that the law must take its course. No excuse is available as against the interests of authority.'



"This was the substance of what the Supreme Judge was so obliging as to repeat to Bordin after his interview with the Emperor. To re-establish tranquillity in the west, which was full of refractory conscripts, Napoleon thought it needful to produce a real 'terror.' The Supreme Judge, in fact, advised the lawyer to trouble himself no further about his clients."

"And the lady?" said Godefroid.

"Madame de la Chanterie was condemned to twenty-two years' imprisonment," replied Alain. "She had already been transferred to Bicetre, near Rouen, to undergo her sentence, and nothing could be thought of till her Henriette was safe; for after these dreadful scenes, she was so wrapped up in her daughter that, but for Bordin's promise to petition for the mitigation of the sentence of death, it was thought that Madame would not have survived her condemnation. So they deceived the poor mother. She saw her daughter after the execution of the men who had been sentenced to death, but did not know that the respite was granted in consequence of a false declaration that her daughter was expecting her confinement."

"Ah, now I understand everything!" cried Godefroid.

"No, my dear boy. There are some things which cannot be guessed.—For a long time after that, Madame believed that her daughter was alive."

"How was that?"

"When Madame des Tours-Minières heard through Bordin that her appeal was rejected, the brave little woman had enough strength of mind to write a score of letters dated for several months after her execution to make her mother believe that she was still alive, but gradually suffering more and more from an imaginary malady, till it ended in death. These letters were spread over a period of two years. Thus Madame de la Chanterie was prepared for her daughter's death, but for a natural death; she did not hear of her execution till 1814.

"For two years she was kept in the common prison with

the most infamous creatures of her sex, wearing the prison dress; then, thanks to the efforts of the Champignelles and the Beauséants, after the second year she was placed in a private cell, where she lived like a cloistered nun."

"And the others?"

"The notary Léveillé, Herbomez, Hiley, Cibot, Grenier, Hureau, Cabot, Minard, and Mallet were condemned to death, and executed the same day; Pannier, Chaussard and Vauthier were sentenced to twenty years' penal servitude; they were branded and sent to the hulks; but the Emperor pardoned Chaussard and Vauthier. Mélin, Laravinière, and Binet had five years' imprisonment. The woman Bourget was imprisoned for twenty-two years. Chargegrain and Rousseau were acquitted. Those who had got away were all sentenced to death, with the exception of the maidservant Godard, who, as you will have guessed, is none other than our good Manon."

"Manon!" exclaimed Godefroid in amazement.

"Oh, you do not yet know Manon," replied the worthy man. "That devoted soul, condemned to twenty-two years' imprisonment, had given herself up to justice that she might be with Madame de la Chanterie in prison. Our beloved vicar is the priest from Mortagne who gave the last sacrament to Madame des Tours-Minières, who had the fortitude to escort her to the scaffold, and to whom she gave her last farewell kiss. The same brave and exalted priest had attended the Chevalier du Vissard. So our dear Abbé de Vèze learned all the secrets of the conspirators."

"I see now when his hair turned white," said Godefroid.

"Alas!" said Alain.—"He received from Amédée du Vissard a miniature of Madame des Tours-Minières, the only likeness of her that exists; and the Abbé has been a sacred personage to Madame de la Chanterie ever since the day when she was restored triumphant to social life."

"How was that?" asked Godefroid in surprise.

"Well, on the restoration of Louis XVIII. in 1814, Boislaurier, who was the younger brother of Monsieur de

Boisfrelon, was still under the King's orders to organize a rising in the West—first in 1809, and afterward in 1812. Their name is Dubut; the Dubut of Caen was related to them. There were three brothers: Dubut de Boisfranc, President of the Court of Subsidies; Dubut de Boisfrelon, Councillor at Law; and Dubut-Boislaurier, a Captain of Dragoons. Their father had given each the name of one of his three several estates to give them a title and status (*savonnette à la vilain*, as it was called), for their grandfather was a linen merchant. Dubut of Caen, who succeeded in escaping, was one of the branch who had stuck to trade; but he hoped, by devoting himself to the Royal cause, to be allowed to succeed to Monsieur de Boisfranc's title. And in fact Louis XVIII. gratified the wish of his faithful adherent, who, in 1815, was made Grand Provost, and subsequently became a Public Prosecutor under the name of Boisfranc; he was President of one of the Higher Courts when he died. The Marquis du Vissard, the unhappy Chevalier's elder brother, created peer of France, and loaded with honors by the King, was made Lieutenant of the Maison Rouge, and when that was abolished became Préfet. Monsieur d'Herbomez had a brother who was made a Count and Receiver-General. The unfortunate banker Pannier died on the hulks of a broken heart. Boislaurier died childless, a Lieutenant-General and Governor of one of the Royal residences.

"Madame de la Chanterie was presented to his Majesty by Monsieur de Champignelles, Monsieur de Beauséant, the Duc de Verneuil, and the Keeper of the Seals.—'You have suffered much for me, Madame la Baronne,' said the King; 'you have every claim on my favor and gratitude.'

" 'Sire,' she replied, 'your Majesty has so much to do in comforting the sufferers that I will not add the burden of an inconsolable sorrow. To live forgotten, to mourn for my daughter, and do some good—that is all I have to live for. If anything could mitigate my grief, it would be the graciousness of my Sovereign, and the happiness of seeing



that Providence did not suffer so much devoted service to be wasted.' ”

“And what did the King do?” asked Godefroid.

“He restored to Madame de la Chanterie two hundred thousand francs in money,” said the good man, “for the estate of Saint-Savin had been sold to make good the loss to the treasury. The letters of pardon granted to Madame la Baronne and her woman express the Sovereign’s regret for all they had endured in his service, while acknowledging that the zeal of his adherents had carried them too far in action; but the thing that will seem to you most horrible of all is, that throughout his reign Bryond was still the agent of his secret police.”

“Oh, what things kings can do!” cried Godefroid.—“And is the wretch still living?”

“No. The scoundrel, who at any rate concealed his name, calling himself Contenson, died at the end of 1829, or early in 1830. He fell from a roof into the street when in pursuit of a criminal.—Louis XVIII. was of the same mind as Napoleon as regards police agents.

“Madame de la Chanterie, a perfect saint, prays for this monster’s soul, and has two masses said for him every year.

“Though her defence was undertaken by one of the famous pleaders of the day, the father of one of our great orators, Madame de la Chanterie, who knew nothing of her daughter’s risks till the moment when the money was brought in—and even then only because Boislaurier, who was related to her, told her the facts—could never establish her innocence. The Président du Ronceret, and Blondet, Vice-President of the Court at Alençon, vainly tried to clear the poor lady; the influence of the notorious Mergi, the Councillor to the Supreme Court under the Empire, who presided over these trials—a man fanatically devoted to the Church and Throne, who afterward, as Public Prosecutor, brought many a Bonapartist head under the axe—was so great at this time over his two colleagues that he secured the condemnation of the unhappy Baronne de la Chanterie.

Bourlac and Mergi argued the case with incredible virulence. The President always spoke of the *Baronne des Tours-Minières* as the woman *Bryond*, and of *Madame* as the woman *Lechantre*. The names of all the accused were reduced to the barest Republican forms, and curtailed of all titles.

"There were some extraordinary features of the trial, and I cannot recall them all; but I remember one stroke of audacity, which may show you what manner of men these Chouans were.—The crowd that pressed to hear the trials was beyond anything your fancy can conceive of; it filled the corridors, and the square outside was thronged as if on market days. One morning at the opening of the Court, before the arrival of the judges, *Pille-Miche*, the famous Chouan, sprang over the balustrade into the middle of the mob, made play with his elbows, mixed with the crowd, and fled among the terrified spectators, 'butting like a wild boar,' as *Bordin* told me. The gendarmes and the people rushed to stop him, and he was caught on the steps just as he had reached the market-place. After this daring attempt, they doubled the guard, and a detachment of men-at-arms was posted on the square, for it was feared that there might be among the crowd some Chouans ready to aid and abet the accused. Three persons were crushed to death in the crowd in consequence of this attempt.

"It was subsequently discovered that *Contenson*—for, like my old friend *Bordin*, I cannot bring myself to call him *Baron des Tours-Minières*, or *Bryond*, which is a respectable old name—that wretch, it was discovered, had made away with sixty thousand francs of the stolen treasure. He gave ten thousand to the younger *Chaussard*, whom he enticed into the police and inoculated with all his low tastes and vices; but all his accomplices were unlucky. The *Chaussard* who escaped was pitched into the sea by *Monsieur de Boislaurier*, who understood from something said by *Pannier* that *Chaussard* had turned traitor. *Contenson* indeed had advised him to join the fugitives in order to spy

upon them. Vauthier was killed in Paris, no doubt by one of the Chevalier du Vissard's obscure but devoted followers. The younger Chaussard too was finally murdered in one of the nocturnal raids conducted by the police; it seems probable that Contenson took this means of ridding himself of his demands or of his remorse by sending him to sermon, as the saying goes.

"Madame de la Chanterie invested her money in the Funds, and purchased this house by the particular desire of her uncle, the old Councillor de Boisfrelon, who in fact gave her the money to buy it. This quiet neighborhood lies close to the Archbishop's residence, where our beloved Abbé has an appointment under the Cardinal. And this was Madame's chief reason for acceding to the old lawyer's wish when his income, after twenty-five years of revolutions, was reduced to six thousand francs a year. Besides, Madame wished to close a life of such terrible misfortunes as had overwhelmed her for six-and-twenty years in almost cloistered seclusion.

"You may now understand the dignity, the majesty, of this long-suffering woman—august indeed, as I may say—"

"Yes," said Godefroid, "the stamp of all she has endured has given her an indefinable air of grandeur and majesty."

"Each blow, each fresh pang has but increased her patience and resignation," Alain went on. "And if you could know her as we do, if you knew how keen her feelings are, and how active is the spring of tenderness that wells up in her heart, you would be afraid to take count of the tears she must shed, and her fervent prayers that ascend to God. Only those who, like her, have known but a brief season of happiness can resist such shocks. Hers is a tender heart, a gentle soul clothed in a frame of steel, tempered by privation, toil, and austerity."

"Such a life as hers explains the life of hermits," said Godefroid.

"There are days when I wonder what can be the mean-



ing of such an existence. Is it that God reserves these utmost, bitterest trials for those of His creatures who shall sit on His right hand on the day after their death?" said the good old man, quite unaware that he was artlessly expressing Swedenborg's doctrine concerning the angels.

"What!" exclaimed Godefroid, "Madame de la Chanterie was mixed up with—?"

"Madame was sublime in prison," Alain said. "In the course of three years the story of the 'Vicar of Wakefield' came true, for she reclaimed several women of profligate lives. And in the course of her imprisonment, as she took note of the conduct of those confined with her, she learned to feel that great pity for the misery of the people which weighs on her soul and has made her the queen of Parisian charity. It was in the horrible Bicêtre of Rouen that she conceived of the plan which we devote ourselves to carry out. It was, as she declared, a dream of rapture, an angelic inspiration in the midst of hell; she had no thought of ever seeing it realized.

"But here, in 1819, when peace seemed to be descending on Paris, she came back to her dream. Madame la Duchesse d'Angouleme, the Dauphiness, the Duchesse de Berri, the Archbishop, and then the Chancellor and some pious persons contributed very liberally to the first necessary expenses. The fund was increased by what we could spare from our income, for each of us spends no more than is absolutely necessary."

Tears rose to Godefroid's eyes.

"We are the faithful priesthood of a Christian idea, and belong body and soul to this work, of which Madame de la Chanterie is the founder and the soul—that lady whom you hear us respectfully designate as Madame."

"Ah, and I too am wholly yours!" cried Godefroid, holding out his hands to the worthy man.

"Now, do you understand that there are subjects of conversation absolutely prohibited here, never even to be alluded to?" Alain went on. "Do you appreciate the

obligation of reticence under which we all feel ourselves to a lady whom we reverence as a saint? Do you understand the charm exerted by a woman made sacred by her misfortunes, having learned so many things, knowing the inmost secret of every form of suffering,—a woman who has derived a lesson from every grief, whose every virtue has the twofold sanction of the hardest tests and of constant practice, whose soul is spotless and above reproach; who has known motherhood only through its sorrows, and conjugal affection only through its bitterness; on whom life never smiled but for a few months—for whom Heaven no doubt keeps a palm in store as the reward of such resignation and gentleness amid sorrows? Is she not superior to Job in that she has never murmured?

"So you need never again be surprised to find her speech so impressive, her old age so fresh, her spirit so full of communion, her looks so persuasive; she has had powers extraordinary bestowed on her as a *confidante* of the sorrowing, for she has known every sorrow. In her presence smaller griefs are mute."

"She is the living embodiment of charity," cried Godefroid with enthusiasm. "May I become one of you?"

"You must pass the tests, and above all else, *Believe!*" said the old man with gentle excitement. "So long as you have not hold on faith, so long as you have not assimilated in your heart and brain the divine meaning of Saint Paul's epistle on Charity, you can take no part in our work."

PARIS, 1843-1845.

## SECOND EPISODE

## INITIATED

*W*HAT IS NOBLY good is contagious, as evil is. And by the time Madame de la Chanterie's boarder had dwelt for some months in this silent old house, after the story told him by Monsieur Alain, which filled him with the deepest respect for the half-monastic life he saw around him, he became conscious of the ease of mind that comes of a regular life, of quiet habits and harmonious tempers in those we live with. In four months Godefroid, never hearing an angry tone or the least dispute, owned to himself that since he had come to years of discretion he did not remember ever being so completely at peace—for he could not say happy. He looked on the world from afar, and judged it sanely. At last the desire he had cherished these three months past to take his part in the deeds of this mysterious association had become a passion; and without being a very profound philosopher, the reader may imagine what strength such a passion may assume in seclusion.

So one day—a day marked as solemn by the ascendancy of the Spirit—Godefroid, after sounding his heart and measuring his powers, went up to his good friend Alain—whom Madame de la Chanterie always called her lamb—for of all the dwellers under that roof he had always seemed to Godefroid the most accessible and the least formidable. To him, then, he would apply, to obtain from the worthy man some information as to the sort of priesthood which these Brethren in God exercised in Paris. Many allusions to a period of probation suggested to him that he would be put to initiatory tests of some kind. His curiosity had not been fully satisfied by what the venerable old man had told him of the



reasons why he had joined Madame de la Chanterie's association; he wanted to know more about this.

At half-past ten o'clock that evening Godefroid found himself for the third time in Monsieur Alain's rooms, just as the old man was preparing to read his chapter of "The Imitation." This time the mild old man could not help smiling, and he said to the young man, before allowing him to speak:

"Why do you apply to me, my dear boy, instead of addressing yourself to Madame? I am the most ignorant, the least spiritual, the most imperfect member of the household.—For the last three days Madame and my friends have seen into your heart," he added, with a little knowing air.

"And what have they seen?" asked Godefroid.

"Oh," said the good man, with perfect simplicity, "they have seen a guileless desire to belong to our community. But the feeling is not yet a very ardent vocation. Nay," he replied to an impulsive gesture of Godefroid's, "you have more curiosity than fervor. In fact, you have not so completely freed yourself from your old ideas but that you imagine something adventurous, something romantic, as the phrase goes, in the incidents of our life—"

Godefroid could not help turning red.

"You fancy that there is some resemblance between our occupations and those of the Caliphs in the 'Arabian Nights,' and you anticipate a kind of satisfaction in playing the part of the good genius in the idyllic beneficences of which you dream! Ah, ha! my son, your smile of confusion shows me that we were not mistaken. How could you expect to conceal your thoughts from us, who make it our business to detect the hidden impulses of the soul, the cunning of poverty, the calculations of the needy; who are honest spies, the police of a merciful Providence, old judges whose code of law knows only absolution, and physicians of every malady whose only prescription is a wise use of money? Still, my dear boy, we do not quarrel with the motives that bring us a neophyte if only he stays with us and becomes

a brother of our Order. We shall judge you by your works. There are two kinds of curiosity—one for good and one for evil. At this moment your curiosity is for good. If you are to become a laborer in our vineyard, the juice of the grapes will give you perpetual thirst for the divine fruit. The initiation looks easy, but is difficult, as in every natural science. In well-doing, as in poetry, nothing can be easier than to clutch at its semblance; but here, as on Parnassus, we are satisfied with nothing short of perfection. To become one of us, you must attain to great knowledge of life—and of such life. Good God! Of that Paris life which defies the scrutiny of the Chief of the Police and his men. It is our task to unmask the permanent conspiracy of evil, and detect it under forms so endlessly changing that they might be thought infinite. In Paris, Charity must be as omniscient as Sin, just as the police agent must be as cunning as the thief. We have to be at once frank and suspicious; our judgment must be as certain and as swift as our eye.

“As you see, dear boy, we are all old and worn-out; but then we are so well satisfied with the results we have achieved, that we wish not to die without leaving successors, and we hold you all the more dear because you may, if you will, be our first disciple. For us there is no risk, we owe you to God! Yours is a sweet nature turned sour, and since you came to live here the evil leaven is weaker. Madame’s heavenly nature has had its effect on you.

“We held council yesterday; and as you have given me your confidence, my good brothers decided on making me your instructor and guide.—Are you satisfied?”

“Oh, my kind Monsieur Alain, your eloquence has aroused—”

“It is not I that speak well, my dear boy, it is that great deeds are eloquent.—We are always sure of soaring high if we obey God and imitate Jesus Christ so far as lies in man aided by faith.”

“This moment has decided my fate; I feel the ardor of

the neophyte!" cried Godefroid. "I too would fain spend my life in well-doing—"

"That is the secret of dwelling in God," replied the good man. "Have you meditated on our motto, *Transire benefaciendo*? *Transire* means to pass beyond this life, leaving a long train of good actions behind you."

"I have understood it so, and I have written up the motto of the order in front of my bed."

"That is well.—And that action, so trivial in itself, is of great value in my eyes.—Well, my son, I have your first task ready for you, I will see you with your foot in the stirrup. We must part.—Yes, for I have to leave our retreat and take my place in the heart of a volcano. I am going as foreman in a large factory where all the workmen are infected with communistic doctrines—and dream of social destruction, of murdering the masters, never seeing that this would be to murder industry, manufacture, and commerce.

"I shall remain there—who knows?—a year, perhaps, as cashier, keeping the books, and making my way into a hundred or more humble homes, among men who were misled by poverty, no doubt, before they were deluded by bad books. However, we shall see each other here every Sunday and holiday; as I shall live in the same quarter of the town we may meet at the Church of Saint-Jacques du Haut-Pas; I shall attend mass there every morning at half-past seven. If you should happen to meet me elsewhere, you must never recognize me, unless I rub my hands with an air of satisfaction. That is one of our signals.—Like the deaf-mutes, we have a language by signs, of which the necessity will soon be more than abundantly evident to you."

Godefroid's expression was intelligible to Monsieur Alain, for he smiled and went on—

"Now for your business. We do not practice either beneficence or philanthropy as they are known to you, under a variety of branches which are preyed upon by



swindlers, just like any other form of trade. We exercise charity as it is defined by our great and sublime master Saint Paul; for it is our belief, my son, that such charity alone can heal the woes of Paris. Thus, in our eyes, sorrow, poverty, suffering, trouble, evil—from whatever cause they may proceed and in whatever class of society we find them—have equal claims upon us. Whatever their creed or their opinions, the unfortunate are, first and foremost, unfortunate; we do not try to persuade them to look to our Holy Mother the Church till we have rescued them from despair and starvation. And even then we try to convert them by example and kindness, for thus we believe that we have the help of God. All coercion is wrong.

“Of all the wretchedness in Paris, the most difficult to discover and the bitterest to endure is that of the respectable middle-class, the better class of citizens, when they fall into poverty, for they make it a point of honor to conceal it. Such disasters as these, my dear Godefroid, are the object of our particular care. Such persons, when we help them, show intelligence and good feeling; they return us with interest what we may loan to them; and in the course of time their repayments cover the losses we meet with through the disabled, or by swindlers, or those whom misfortune has stultified. Sometimes we get useful information from those we have helped; but the work has grown to such vast dimensions, and its details are so numerous, that it is beyond our powers. Now, for the last seven or eight months, we have a physician in our employment in each district of the city of Paris. Each of us has four *arrondissements* (or wards) under his eye; and we are prepared to pay to each three thousand francs a year to take charge of our poor. He is required to give up his time and care to them by preference, but we do not prevent his taking other patients. Would you believe that we have not in eight months been able to find twelve such men, twelve good men, in spite of the pecuniary aid offered by our friends and acquaintance? You see, we needed men of absolute secrecy, of pure life,

of recognized abilities, and with a love of doing good. Well, in Paris there are perhaps ten thousand men fit for the work, and yet in a year's search the twelve elect have not been found."

"Our Lord found it hard to collect His apostles," said Godefroid, "and there were a traitor and a disbeliever among them after all!"

"At last, within the past fortnight, each *arrondissement* has been provided with a *visitor*," said the old man, smiling—"for so we call our physicians—and, indeed, within that fortnight there has been a vast increase of business. However, we have worked all the harder. I tell you this secret of our infant fraternity because you must make acquaintance with the physician of your district, all the more so because we depend on him for information. This gentleman's name is Berton—Doctor Berton—and he lives in the Rue del'Enfer.

"Now for the facts. Doctor Berton is attending a lady whose disease seems in some way to defy science. That indeed does not concern us, but only the Faculty; our business is to find out the poverty of the sick woman's family, which the doctor believes to be frightful, and concealed with a determination and pride that baffle all our inquiries. Hitherto, my dear boy, this would have been my task; but now the work to which I am devoting myself makes an assistant necessary in my four districts, and you must be that assistant. The family lives in the Rue Notre-Dame des Champs, in a house looking out over the Boulevard du Mont-Parnasse. You will easily find a room to let there, and while lodging there for a time you must try to discover the truth. Be sordid as regards your own expenses, but do not trouble your head about the money you give. I will send you such sums as we consider necessary, taking all the circumstances of the case into consideration. But study the moral character of these unfortunate people. A good heart and noble feelings are the security for our loans. Stingy to ourselves and generous to suffering, we must still be careful and never rash, for we dip into the treasury of the poor.—

Go to-morrow, and remember how much power lies in your hands. The Brethren will be on your side."

"Ah!" cried Godefroid, "you have given me so much pleasure in trusting me to do good and be worthy of some day being one of you, that I shall not sleep for joy."

"Stay, my boy, one last piece of advice. The prohibition to recognize me unless I make the sign concerns the other gentlemen and Madame, and even the servants of the house. Absolute incognito is indispensable to all our undertakings, and we are so constantly obliged to preserve it that we have made it a law without exceptions. We must be unknown, lost in Paris.

"Remember, too, my dear Godefroid, the very spirit of our Order, which requires us never to appear as benefactors, but to play the obscure part of intermediaries. We always represent ourselves as the agents of some saintly and beneficent personage—are we not toiling for God?—so that no gratitude may be considered due to ourselves, and that we may not be supposed to be rich. True, sincere humility, not the false humility of those who keep in the shade that others may throw a light on them, must inspire and govern all your thoughts.—You may rejoice when you succeed; but so long as you feel the least impulse of vanity, you will be unworthy to join the Brotherhood. We have known two perfect men. One, who was one of our founders, Judge Popinot; the other, who was known by his works, was a country doctor who has left his name written in a remote parish. He, my dear Godefroid, was one of the greatest men of our day; he raised a whole district from a savage state to one of prosperity, from irreligion to the Catholic faith, from barbarism to civilization. The names of those two men are graven on our hearts, and we regard them as our examples. We should be happy indeed if we might one day have in Paris such influence as that country doctor had in his own district.

"But here the plague-spot is immeasurable, and, so far, quite beyond our powers. May God long preserve Madame,



and send us many such helpers as you, and then perhaps we may found an Institution that will lead men to bless His holy religion.

"Well, farewell. Your initiation now begins.

"Bless me! I chatter like a Professor, and was forgetting the most important matter. Here is the address of the family I spoke of," he went on, handing a scrap of paper to Godefroid. "And I have added the number of Monsieur Berton's house in the Rue de l'Enfer.—Now, go and pray God to help you."

Godefroid took the good old man's hands and pressed them affectionately, bidding him good-night, and promising to forget none of his injunctions.

"All you have said," he added, "is stamped on my memory for life."

Alain smiled with no expression of doubt, and rose to go and kneel on his priè-Dieu. Godefroid went back to his own room, happy in being at last allowed to know the mysteries of this household, and to have an occupation which, in his present frame of mind, was really a pleasure.

At breakfast next morning there was no Monsieur Alain, but Godefroid made no remark on his absence. Nor was he questioned as to the mission given him by the old man; thus he received his first lesson in secrecy. After breakfast, however, he took Madame de la Chanterie aside, and told her that he should be absent for a few days.

"Very well, my child," replied Madame de la Chanterie. "And try to do your sponsor credit, for Monsieur Alain has answered for you to his brethren."

Godefroid took leave of the other three men, who embraced him affectionately, seeming thus to give him their blessing on his outset in his laborious career.

Association—one of the greatest social forces which was the making of Europe in the Middle Ages—is based on feelings which have ceased, since 1792, to exist in France, where the individual is now supreme over the State. Association

requires, in the first place, a kind of devotedness which is not understood in this country; a simplicity of faith which is contrary to the national spirit; and finally, a discipline against which everything rebels, and which nothing but the Catholic faith can exact. As soon as an Association is formed in France, each member of it, on returning home from a meeting where the finest sentiments have been expressed, makes a bed for himself of the collective devotion of this combination of forces, and tries to milk for his own benefit the cow belonging to all, till the poor thing, inadequate to meet so many individual demands, dies of attenuation.

None can tell how many generous emotions have been nipped, how many fervid germs have perished, how much resource has been crushed and lost to the country by the shameful frauds of the French secret Societies, of the patriotic fund for the Champs d'Asile (emigration to America), and other political swindles, which ought to have produced great and noble dramas, and turned out mere farces of the lower police courts.

It was the same with industrial as with political associations. Self-interest took the place of public spirit. The Corporations and Hanseatic Guilds of the Middle Ages, to which we shall some day return, are as yet out of the question; the only Societies that still exist are religious institutions, and at this moment they are being very roughly attacked, for the natural tendency of the sick is to rebel against the remedies and often to rend the physician. France knows not what self-denial means. Hence no Association can hold together but by the aid of religious sentiment, the only power that can quell the rebellion of the intellect, the calculations of ambition, and greed of every kind. Those who are in search of worlds fail to understand that Association has worlds in its gift.

Godefroid, as he made his way through the streets, felt himself a different man. Any one who could have read his mind would have wondered at the curious phenomenon of the communication of the spirit of union. He was no longer

one man, but a being multiplied tenfold, feeling himself the representative of five persons whose united powers were at the back of all he did, and who walked with him on his way. With this strength in his heart, he was conscious of a fullness of life, a lofty power that uplifted him. It was, as he afterward owned, one of the happiest moments of his life, for he rejoiced in a new sense—that of an omnipotence more absolute than that of despots. Moral force, like thought, knows no limits.

“This is living for others,” said he to himself, “acting with others as if we were but one man, and acting alone as if we were all together! This is having Charity for a leader, the fairest and most living of all the ideals that have been created of the Catholic virtues.—Yes, this is living!—Come, I must subdue this childish exultation which Father Alain would laugh to scorn.—Still, is it not strange that it is by dint of trying to annul my Self that I have found the power so long wished for? The world of misfortune is to be my inheritance.”

He crossed the precincts of Notre-Dame to the Avenue de l'Observatoire in such high spirits that he did not heed the length of the walk.

Having reached the Rue Notre-Dame des Champs, at the end of the Rue de l'Ouest, he was surprised to find such pools of mud in so handsome a quarter of the town, for neither of those streets was as yet paved. The foot-passenger had to walk on planks laid close to the walls of the marshy gardens, or creep by the houses on narrow side-paths, which were soon swamped by the stagnant waters that turned them into gutters.

After much seeking, he discovered the house described to him, and got to it, not without some difficulty. It was evidently an old manufactory which had been abandoned. The building was narrow, and the front was a long wall pierced with windows quite devoid of any ornament; but there were none of these square openings on the ground floor—only a wretched back-door.



Godefroid supposed that the owner had contrived a number of rooms in this structure to his own profit, for over the door there was a board scrawled by hand to this effect: *Several rooms to let.* Godefroid rang, but no one came; and as he stood waiting, a passer-by pointed out to him that there was another entrance to the house from the boulevard, where he would find somebody to speak to.

Godefroid acted on the information, and from the boulevard he saw the front of the house screened by the trees of a small garden-plot. This garden, very ill-kept, sloped to the house, for there is such a difference of level between the boulevard and the Rue Notre-Dame des Champs as to make the garden a sort of ditch. Godefroid went down the path, and at the bottom of it saw an old woman whose dilapidated garb was in perfect harmony with the dwelling.

"Was it you who rang in the Rue Notre-Dame?" she asked.

"Yes, Madame.—Is it your business to show the rooms?"

On a reply in the affirmative from this portress, whose age it was difficult to determine, Godefroid inquired whether the house was tenanted by quiet folk; his occupations required peace and silence; he was a bachelor, and wished to arrange with the doorkeeper to cook and clean for him.

On this hint the woman became gracious, and said—

"Monsieur could not have done better than to hit on this house; for, excepting the days when there are doings at the Chaumière, the boulevard is as deserted as the Pontine Marshes—"

"Do you know the Pontine Marshes?" asked Godefroid.

"No, sir; but there is an old gentleman upstairs whose daughter is always in a dying state, and he says so.—I only repeat it. That poor old man will be truly glad to think that you want peace and quiet, for a lodger who stormed around would be the death of his daughter.—And we have two writers of some kind on the second floor, but they come in for the day at midnight, and then at night they go out at

eight in the morning. Authors, they say they are, but I do not know where or when they work."

As she spoke, the portress led Godefroid up one of those horrible stairs built of wood and brick, in such an unholy alliance that it is impossible to say whether the wood is parting from the bricks or the bricks are disgusted at being set in the wood; while both materials seem to fortify their disunion by masses of dust in summer and of mud in winter. The walls, of cracked plaster, bore more inscriptions than the Academy of Belles-lettres ever invented.

The woman stopped on the first floor.

"Now, here, sir, are two very good rooms, opening into each other, and on to Monsieur Bernard's landing. He is the old gentleman I mentioned—and quite the gentleman. He has the ribbon of the Legion of Honor, but he has had great troubles, it would seem, for he never wears it.—When first they came they had a servant to wait on them, a man from the country, and they sent him away close on three years ago. The lady's young gentleman—her son—does everything now; he manages it all—"

Godefroid looked shocked.

"Oh!" said the woman, "don't be uneasy, they will say nothing to you; they never speak to anybody. The gentleman has been here ever since the Revolution of July; he came in 1831.—They are some high provincial family, I believe, ruined by the change of government; and proud! and as mute as fishes.—For four years, sir, they have never let me do the least thing for them, for fear of having to pay.—A five-franc piece on New Year's Day, that's every sou I get out of them.—Give me your authors! I get ten francs a month, only to tell everybody who comes to ask for them that they left at the end of last quarter."

All this babble led Godefroid to hope for an ally in this woman, who explained to him, as she praised the airiness of the two rooms and adjoining dressing-closets, that she was not the portress, but the landlord's deputy and housekeeper, managing everything for him to a great extent.

"And you may trust me, Monsieur, I promise you! Madame Vauthier—that's me—would rather have nothing at all than take a sou of anybody else's."

Madame Vauthier soon came to terms with Godefroid, who wished to take the rooms by the month and ready furnished. These wretched lodgings, rented by students or authors "down on their luck," were let furnished or unfurnished, as might be required. The spacious lofts over the whole house were full of furniture. But Monsieur Bernard himself had furnished the rooms he was in.

By getting Madame Vauthier to talk, Godefroid discovered that her ambition was to set up a *pension bourgeoise*; but in the course of five years she had failed to meet with a single boarder among her lodgers. She inhabited the ground floor, on the side toward the boulevard; thus she was herself the doorkeeper, with the help of a big dog, a sturdy girl, and a boy who cleaned the boots, ran errands, and did the rooms, two creatures as poor as herself, in harmony with the squalor of the house and its inhabitants, and the desolate, neglected appearance of the garden in front.

They were both foundlings, to whom the widow Vauthier gave no wages but their food—and such food! The boy, of whom Godefroid caught a glimpse, wore a ragged blouse, list slippers instead of shoes, and sabots to go out in. With a shock of hair as tousled as a sparrow taking a bath, and blackened hands, as soon as he had done the work of the house, he went off to measure wood logs in a woodyard hard by, and when his day was over—at half-past four for wood-sawyers—he returned to his occupations. He fetched water for the household from the fountain by the Observatory, and the widow supplied it to the lodgers, as well as the fagots which he chopped and tied.

Népomucène—this was the name of the widow Vauthier's slave—handed over his earnings to his mistress. In summer-time the unhappy waif served as waiter in the wineshops by the *barrière* on Sundays and Mondays. Then the woman gave him decent clothes.



As for the girl, she cooked under the widow's orders, and helped her in her trade work at other times, for the woman plied a trade; she made list slippers for pedlers to sell.

All these details were known to Godefroid within an hour, for Madame Vauthier took him all over the house, showing him how it had been altered. A silkworm establishment had been carried on there till 1828, not so much for the production of silk as for that of the eggs—the seed, as it is called. Eleven acres of mulberry trees at Mont-Rouge, and three acres in the Rue de l'Ouest, since built over, had supplied food for this nursery for silkworms' eggs.

Madame Vauthier was telling Godefroid that Monsieur Barbet, who had loaned the capital to an Italian named Fresconi to carry on this business, had been obliged to sell those three acres to recover the money secured by a mortgage on the land and buildings, and was pointing out the plot of ground, lying on the other side of the Rue Notre-Dame des Champs, when a tall and meagre old man, with perfectly white hair, came in sight at the end of the street where it crosses the Rue de l'Ouest.

"In the very nick of time!" cried Madame Vauthier. "Look, that is your neighbor, Monsieur Bernard:—Monsieur Bernard," cried she, as soon as the old man was within hearing, "you will not be alone now; this gentleman here has just taken the rooms opposite yours—"

Monsieur Bernard looked up at Godefroid with an apprehensive eye that was easy to read; it was as though he had said, "Then the misfortune I have so long feared has come upon me!"

"What, Monsieur," said he, "you propose to reside here?"

"Yes, Monsieur," said Godefroid civilly. "This is no home for those who are lucky in the world, and it is the cheapest lodging I have seen in this part of the town. Madame Vauthier does not expect to harbor millionnaires.—

Good-day, then, Madame Vauthier; arrange things so that I may come in at six o'clock this evening. I shall return punctually."

And Godefroid went off toward the Rue de l'Ouest, walking slowly, for the anxiety he had read in the old man's face led him to suppose that he wanted to dispute the matter with him. And, in fact, after some little hesitation, Monsieur Bernard turned on his heel and walked quickly enough to come up with Godefroid.

"That old wretch! he wants to hinder him from coming back," said Madame Vauthier to herself. "Twice already he has played me that trick.—Patience! His rent is due in five days, and if he does not pay it down on the nail, out he goes! Monsieur Barbet is a tiger of a sort that does not need much lashing, and—I should like to know what he is saying to him.—Félicité! Félicité! you lazy hussy, will you make haste?" cried the widow in a formidable croak, for she had assumed an affable piping tone in speaking to Godefroid.

The girl, a sturdy, red-haired slut, came running out.

"Just keep a sharp eye on everything for a few seconds, do you hear? I shall be back in five minutes."

And the widow Vauthier, formerly cook to the bookseller's shop kept by Barbet, one of the hardest money-lenders on short terms in the neighborhood, stole out at the heels of her two lodgers, so as to watch them from a distance and rejoin Godefroid as soon as he and Monsieur Bernard should part company.

Monsieur Bernard was walking slowly, like a man in two minds, or a debtor seeking for excuses to give to a creditor who has left him to take proceedings.

Godefroid, in front of this unknown neighbor, turned round to look at him under pretence of looking about him. And it was not till they had reached the broad walk in the Luxembourg Gardens that Monsieur Bernard came up with Godefroid and addressed him.

"I beg your pardon a thousand times, Monsieur," said he, bowing to Godefroid, who returned the bow, "for stopping you, when I have not the honor of knowing you; but is it your firm intention to live in the horrible house where I am lodging?"

"Indeed, Monsieur—"

"I know," said the old man, interrupting Godefroid with a commanding air, "that you have a right to ask me what concern of mine it is to meddle in your affairs, to question you.—Listen, Monsieur; you are young, and I am very old; I am older than my years, and they are sixty-six—I might be taken for eighty!—Age and misfortune justify many things, since the law exempts septuagenarians from various public duties; still, I do not dwell on the privileges bestowed by white hairs; it is you whom I am concerned for. Do you know that the part of the town in which you think of living is a desert by eight in the evening, and full of dangers, of which being robbed is the least? Have you noticed the wide plots where there are no houses, the waste ground and market gardens?—You will, perhaps, retort that I live there; but I, Monsieur, am never out of doors after six in the evening. Or you will say that two young men are lodgers on the second floor, above the rooms you propose to take; but, Monsieur, those two unhappy writers are the victims of writs out against them; they are pursued by their creditors; they are in hiding, and go out all day to come in at midnight; and as they always keep together and carry arms, they have no fear of being robbed.—I myself obtained permission from the chief of the police for them each to carry a weapon."

"Indeed, Monsieur," said Godefroid, "I have no fear of robbers, for the same reasons as leave these gentlemen invulnerable, and so great a contempt for life that if I should be murdered by mistake I should bless the assassin."

"And yet you do not look so very wretched," said the old man, who was studying Godefroid.

"I have barely enough to live on, to give me bread, and



I chose that part of town for the sake of the quiet that reigns there.—But may I ask, Monsieur, what object you can have in keeping me out of the house?"

The old man hesitated; he saw Madame Vauthier in pursuit. Godefroid, who was examining him attentively, was surprised at the excessive emaciation to which grief, and perhaps hunger, or perhaps hard work, had reduced him; there were traces of all these causes of weakness on the face where the withered skin looked dried on to the bones, as if it had been exposed to the African sun. The forehead, which was high and threatening, rose in a dome above a pair of steel-blue eyes, cold, hard, shrewd, and piercing as those of a savage, and set in deep, dark, and very wrinkled circles, like a bruise round each. A large, long, thin nose, and the upward curve of the chin, gave the old man a marked likeness to the familiar features of Don Quixote; but this was a sinister Don Quixote, a man of no delusions, a terrible Don Quixote.

The old man, in spite of his look of severity, betrayed nevertheless the timidity and weakness that poverty gives to the unfortunate. And these two feelings seemed to have graven lines of ruin on a face so strongly framed that the destroying pickaxe of misery had rough hewn it. The mouth was expressive and grave. Don Quixote was crossed with the *Président de Montesquieu*.

The man's dress was of black cloth throughout, but utterly threadbare; the coat, old-fashioned in cut, and the trousers showed many badly-executed patches. The buttons had been recently renewed. The coat was fastened to the chin, showing no linen, and a rusty-black stock covered the absence of a collar. These black clothes, worn for many years, reeked of poverty. But the mysterious old man's air of dignity, his gait, the mind that dwelt behind that brow and lighted up those eyes, seemed irreconcilable with poverty. An observer would have found it hard to class this Parisian.

Monsieur Bernard was so absent-minded that he might

have been taken for a professor of the college-quarter, a learned man lost in jealous and overbearing meditation; and Godefroid was filled with excessive interest and a degree of curiosity to which his beneficent mission added a spur.

"Monsieur," said the old man presently, "if I were assured that all you seek is silence and privacy, I would say, 'Come and live near me.' Take the rooms," he went on in a louder voice, so that the widow might hear him, as she passed them, listening to what they were saying. "I am a father, Monsieur, I have no one belonging to me in the world but my daughter and her son to help me to endure the miseries of life; but my daughter needs silence and perfect quiet.—Every one who has hitherto come to take the rooms you wish to lodge in has yielded to the reasoning and the entreaties of a heartbroken father; they did not care in which street they settled of so desolate a part of the town, where cheap lodgings are plenty and boarding-houses at very low rates. But you, I see, are very much bent on it, and I can only beg you, Monsieur, not to deceive me; for if you should, I can but leave and settle beyond the barrier.—And, in the first place, a removal might cost my daughter her life," he said in a broken voice, "and then, who knows whether the doctors who come to attend her—for the love of God—would come outside the gates?—"

If the man could have shed tears, they would have run down his cheeks as he spoke these last words; but there were tears in his voice, to use a phrase that has become commonplace, and he covered his brow with a hand that was mere bone and sinew.

"What, then, is the matter with Madame, your daughter?" asked Godefroid in a voice of ingratiating sympathy.

"A terrible disease to which the doctors give a variety of names—or rather, which has no name.—All my fortune went—"

But he checked himself, and said, with one of those movements peculiar to the unfortunate—

"The little money I had—for in 1830, dismissed from a

high position, I found myself without an income—in short, everything I had was soon eaten up by my daughter, who had already ruined her mother and her husband's family. At the present time the pension I draw hardly suffices to pay for necessities in the state in which my poor saintly daughter now is.—She has exhausted all my power to weep.

"I have endured every torment, Monsieur; I must be of granite still to live—or rather, God preserves the father that his child may still have a nurse or a providence, for her mother died of exhaustion.

"Ay, young man, you have come at a moment when this old tree that has never bent is feeling the axe of suffering, sharpened by poverty, cutting at its heart. And I, who have never complained to anybody, will tell you about this long illness to keep you from coming to the house—or, if you insist, to show you how necessary it is that our quiet should not be disturbed.

"At this moment, Monsieur, day and night, my daughter barks like a dog!"

"She is mad, then?" said Godefroid.

"She is in her right mind, and a perfect saint," replied Monsieur Bernard. "You will think that I am mad when I have told you all. My only daughter is the child of a mother who enjoyed excellent health. I never in my life loved but one woman—she was my wife. I chose her myself, and married for love the daughter of one of the bravest colonels in the Imperial guard, a Pole formerly on the Emperor's staff, the gallant General Tarlovski. In the place I held strict morality was indispensable; but my heart is not adapted to accommodate many fancies—I loved my wife faithfully, and she deserved it. And I am as constant as a father as I was as a husband; I can say no more.

"My daughter never left her mother's care; no girl ever led a chaster or more Christian life than my dear child. She was more than pretty—lovely; and her husband, a young



man of whose character I was certain, for he was the son of an old friend, a President of the Supreme Court, I am sure was in no way contributory to his wife's malady."

Monsieur Bernard and Godefroid involuntarily stood still a moment looking at each other.

"Marriage, as you know, often changes a woman's constitution," the old man went on. "My daughter's first child was safely brought into the world, a son—my grandson, who lives with us, and who is the only descendant of either of the united families. The second time my daughter was expecting an infant, she had such singular symptoms that the physicians, all puzzled, could only ascribe them to the singular conditions which sometimes occur in such cases, and which are recorded in the memoirs of medical science. The infant was born dead, literally strangled by internal convulsions. Thus began the illness—temporary conditions had nothing to do with it.—Perhaps you are a medical student?" Godefroid replied with a nod, which might be either negative or affirmative.

"After this disastrous child-bearing," Monsieur Bernard went on—"a scene that made so terrible an impression on my son-in-law that it laid the foundations of the decline of which he died—my daughter, at the end of two or three months, complained of general debility, more particularly affecting her feet, which felt, as she described it, as if they were made of cotton. This weakness became paralysis, but what a strange form of paralysis! You may bend my daughter's feet under her, twist them round, and she feels nothing. The limbs are there, but they seem to have no blood, no flesh, no bones. This condition, which is unlike any recognized disease, has attacked her arms and hands; it was supposed to be connected with her spine. Doctors and remedies have only made her worse; my poor child cannot move without dislocating her hips, shoulders, or wrists. We have had for a long time an excellent surgeon, almost in the house, who makes it his care, with the help of a doctor—or doctors, for several have seen her out of curiosity—

to replace the joints—would you believe me, Monsieur?—as often as three or four times a day.

“Ah! I was forgetting to tell you—for this illness has so many forms—that during the early weak stage, before paralysis supervened, my daughter was liable to the most extraordinary attacks of catalepsy. You know what catalepsy is. She would lie with her eyes open and staring, sometimes in the attitude in which the fit seized her. She has had the most incredible forms of this affection, even attacks of tetanus.

“This phase of the disease suggested to me the application of mesmerism as a cure when I saw her so strangely paralyzed. Then, Monsieur, my daughter became miraculously *clairvoyante*, her mind was subject to every marvel of somnambulism, as her body is to every form of disease.”

Godefroid was indeed wondering whether the old man were quite sane.

“For my part,” he went on, heedless of the expression of Godefroid’s eyes, “I, brought up on Voltaire, Diderot, and Helvétius, am a son of the eighteenth century, of the Revolution; and I laughed to scorn all the records handed down from antiquity and middle ages of persons possessed—yes, and yet *possession* is the only explanation of the state my child is in. Even in her mesmeric sleep she has never been able to reveal the cause of her sufferings; she could not see it; and the methods of treatment suggested by her under those conditions, though carefully followed, have had no good result. For instance, she said she must be wrapped in a freshly-killed pig; then she was to have points of highly magnetized red-hot iron applied to her legs; to have melted sealing-wax on her spine.—And what a wreck she became; her teeth fell out; she became deaf, and then dumb; and suddenly, after six months of perfect deafness and silence, she recovered hearing and speech. She occasionally recovers the use of her hands as unexpectedly as she loses it, but for seven years she has never known the use of her feet.

“She has sometimes had well-defined and characteristic

attacks of hydrophobia. Not only may the sight or sound of water, of a glass or a cup, rouse her to frenzy, but she barks like a dog, a melancholy bark, or howls, as dogs do at the sound of an organ.

"She has several times seemed to be dying, and has received the last sacraments, and then come back to life again to suffer with full understanding and clearness of mind, for her faculties of heart and brain remain unimpaired. Though she is alive, she has caused the death of her husband and her mother, who could not stand such repeated trials. Alas!—Nor is this all. Every function of nature is perverted; only a medical man could give you a complete account of the strange condition of every organ.

"In this state did I bring her to Paris from the country in 1829; for the famous physicians to whom I described the case—Desplein, Bianchon, and Haudry—believed I was trying to impose upon them. At that time magnetism was stoutly denied by the schools. Without throwing any doubt on the provincial doctors' good faith or mine, they thought there was some inaccuracy, or, if you like, some exaggeration, such as is common enough in families or in the sufferers themselves. But they have been obliged to change their views; to these phenomena, indeed, it is due that nervous diseases have of late years been made the subject of investigation, for this strange case is now classed as nervous. The last consultation held by these gentlemen led them to give up all medicine; they decided that nature must be studied, but left to itself; and since then I have had but one doctor—the doctor who attends the poor of this district. In fact, all that can be done is done to alleviate her sufferings, since their causes remain unknown."

The old man paused, as if this terrible confession were too much for him.

"For five years now my daughter has lived through alternations of amendment and relapse; but no new symptoms have appeared. She suffers more or less from the various forms of nervous attack which I have briefly described to



you; but the paralysis of the legs and organic disturbances are constant. Our narrow means—increasingly narrow—compelled us to move from the rooms I took in 1829 in the Rue du Roule; and as my daughter cannot bear being moved, and I nearly lost her twice, first in coming to Paris, and then in moving here from the Beaujon side, I took the lodging in which we now are, foreseeing the disasters which ere long overtook us; for, after thirty years' service, I was kept waiting for my pension till 1833. I have drawn it only for six months, and the new government has crowned its severities by granting me only the minimum."

Godefroid expressed such surprise as seemed to demand entire confidence, and so the old man understood it, for he went on at once, not without a reproachful glance toward heaven.

"I am one of the thousand victims to political reaction. I carefully hide a name that is obnoxious to revenge; and if the lessons of experience ever avail from one generation to the next, remember, young man, never to lend yourself to the severity of any *side* in politics. Not that I repent of having done my duty, my conscience is at peace; but the powers of to-day have ceased to have that sense of common responsibility which binds governments together, however dissimilar; when zeal meets with a reward, it is the result of transient fear. The instrument, having served its purpose, is, sooner or later, completely forgotten. In me you see one of the staunchest supporters of the throne under the elder branch of the Bourbons, as I was, too, of the Imperial rule, and I am a beggar! As I am too proud to ask charity, no one will ever guess that I am suffering intolerable ills.

"Five days since, Monsieur, the district medical officer who attends my daughter, or who watches the case, told me that he had no hope of curing a disease of which the symptoms vary every fortnight. His view is that neurotic patients are the despair of the Faculty because the causes lie in a system that defies investigation. He advises me to call in a certain Jewish doctor, who is spoken of as a quack;

but at the same time he remarked that he was a foreigner, a Polish refugee, and that physicians are extremely jealous of certain extraordinary cures that have been much talked of; some people regard him as very learned and skilful.

"But he is exacting and suspicious; he selects his patients, and will not waste time; and then he is—a communist. His name is Halpersohn. My grandson has called on him twice, but in vain; for he has not yet been to the house, and I understand why."

"Why?" asked Godefroid.

"Oh, my grandson, who is sixteen, is worse clothed even than I am; and, will you believe me, Monsieur, I dare not show myself to this doctor; my dress is too ill-suited to what is expected in a man of my age, and of some dignity too. If he should see the grandfather so destitute as I am when the grandson has shown himself in the same sorry plight, would he devote due care to my daughter? He would treat her as paupers are always treated.—And you must remember, Monsieur, that I love my daughter for the grief she has caused me, as of old I loved her for the care she lavished upon me. She has become a perfect angel. Alas! She is now no more than a soul—a soul that beams on her son and on me; her body is no more, for she has triumphed over pain.

"Imagine what a spectacle for a father! My daughter's world is her bedroom. She must have flowers which she loves; she reads a great deal; and when she has the use of her hands, she works like a fairy. She knows nothing of the misery in which we live. Our life is such a strange one that we can admit no one to our rooms.—Do you understand me, Monsieur? Do you see that a neighbor is intolerable? I should have to ask so much of him that I should be under the greatest obligations—and I could never discharge them. In the first place, I have no time for anything: I am educating my grandson, and I work so hard, Monsieur—so hard, that I never sleep for more than three or four hours at night."

"Monsieur," said Godefroid, interrupting the old man, to whom he had listened attentively while watching him with grieved attention, "I will be your neighbor, and I will help you—"

The old gentleman drew himself up with pride, indeed, with impatience, for he did not believe in any good thing in man.

"I will help you," repeated Godefroid, taking the old man's hands and pressing them warmly, "in such ways as I can.—Listen to me. What do you intend to make of your grandson?"

"He is soon to begin studying the law; I mean him to be an advocate."

"Then your grandson will cost you six hundred francs a year, and you—"

The old man said nothing.

"I have nothing," said Godefroid after a pause, "but I have influence; I will get at the Jewish doctor; and if your daughter is curable, she shall be cured. We will find means to repay this Halpersohn."

"Oh, if my daughter were cured, I would make the sacrifice that can be made but once; I would give up what I am saving for a rainy day."

"You may keep that too."

"Ah! what a thing it is to be young!" said the old man, shaking his head. "Good-by, Monsieur, or rather *au revoir*. The library is open, and as I have sold all my books, I have to go there every day for my work."

"I am grateful to you for the kind feeling you have shown; but we must see whether you can show me such consideration as I am obliged to require of a neighbor. That is all I ask of you—"

"Yes, Monsieur, pray accept me as your neighbor; for Barbet, as you know, is not the man to put up long with empty rooms, and you might meet with a worse companion in misery than I.—I do not ask you to believe in me, only to allow me to be of use to you."



"And what interest can you have in serving me?" cried the old man, as he was about to go down the steps of the Cloister of the Carthusians, through which there was at that time a passage from the broad walk of the Luxembourg to the Rue de l'Enfer.

"Have you never, in the course of your career, obliged anybody?"

The old man looked at Godefroid with knit brows, his eyes vague with reminiscence, like a man searching through the record of his life for an action for which he might deserve such rare gratitude; then he coldly turned away, after bowing with evident suspicion.

"Come! for a first meeting he was not particularly distant," said the disciple to himself.

Godefroid went at once to the Rue de l'Enfer, the address given him by Monsieur Alain, and found Doctor Berton at home—a stern, cold man, who surprised him greatly by assuring him that the details given by Monsieur Bernard of his daughter's illness were absolutely correct; he then went in search of Doctor Halpersohn.

The Polish physician, since so famous, at that time lived at Chaillot in a little house in the Rue Marbeuf, of which he occupied the first floor. General Roman Zarnovicki lived on the ground floor, and the servants of the two refugees occupied the attics of the little hotel, only one story high. Godefroid did not see the doctor; he had been sent for to some distance in the country by a rich patient. But Godefroid was almost glad not to have met him, for in his haste he had neglected to provide himself with money, and was obliged to return to the Hotel de la Chanterie to fetch some from his room.

These walks, and the time it took to dine in a restaurant in the Rue de l'Odéon, kept him busy till the hour when he was to take possession of his lodgings on the Boulevard Mont-Parnasse.

Nothing could be more wretched than the furniture pro-

vided by Madame Vauthier for the two rooms. It seemed as though the woman was in the habit of letting rooms not to be inhabited. The bed, the chairs, the tables, the drawers, the desk, the curtains, had all evidently been purchased at sales under compulsion of the law, where the money-lender had kept them on account, no cash value being obtainable—a not infrequent case.

Madame Vauthier, her arms akimbo, expected thanks, and she took Godefroid's smile for one of surprise.

"Oh, yes, I have given you the best of everything, my dear Monsieur Godefroid," said she with an air of triumph. "Look what handsome silk curtains, and a mahogany bedstead that is not at all worm-eaten. It belonged to the Prince de Wissembourg, and was bought out of his mansion. When he left the Rue Louis-le-Grand, in 1809, I was scullery-maid in his kitchen, and from there I went to live with my landlord—"

Godefroid checked this confidential flow by paying his month's lodging in advance, and at the same time gave Madame Vauthier six francs, also in advance, for doing his rooms. At this moment he heard a bark; and if he had not been forewarned, he might have thought that his neighbor kept a dog in his lodgings.

"Does that dog bark at night?" he asked.

"Oh, be easy, sir, and have patience; there will not be above a week of it. Monsieur Bernard will not be able to pay his rent, and he will be turned out.—Still, they are queer folk, I must say! I never saw their dog.—For months that dog—for months, did I say?—for six months at a time you will never hear that dog, and you might think they didn't keep one. The creature never comes out of Madame's room. There is a lady who is very bad; she has never been out of her bed since they carried her in. Old Monsieur Bernard works very hard, and his son too, who is a day pupil at the College Louis-le-Grand, where he is in the top class for philosophy, and he is but sixteen. A bright chap that! but that little beggar works like a good 'un.

"You will hear them presently moving the flower pots in the lady's room—for they eat nothing but dry bread, the old man and his grandson, but they buy flowers and nice things for her. She must be very bad, poor thing, never to have stirred out since she came; and if you take Monsieur Berton's word—he is the doctor who comes to see her—she never will go out but feet foremost."

"And what is this Monsieur Bernard?"

"A very learned man, so they say; for he writes and goes to work in the public libraries, and the master loans him money on account of what he writes."

"The master—who?"

"The landlord, Monsieur Barbet, the old bookseller; he has been in business this sixteen years. He is a man from Normandy, who once sold salad in the streets, and who started as a dealer in old books on the quay, in 1818; then he set up a little shop, and now he is very rich.—He is a sort of old Jew who runs six-and-thirty businesses at once, for he was a kind of partner with the Italian who built this great barn to keep silkworms in—"

"And so the house is a place of refuge for authors in trouble?" said Godefroid.

"Are you so unlucky as to be one?" asked the widow Vauthier.

"I am only a beginner," said Godefroid.

"Oh, my good gentleman, for all the ill I wish you, never get any further! A newspaper man, now—I won't say—"

Godefroid could not help laughing, and he bid the woman good-night—a cook unconsciously representing the whole middle class.

As he went to bed in the wretched room, floored with bricks that had not even been colored, and hung with paper at seven sous the piece, Godefroid not only regretted his little lodging in the Rue Chanoinesse, but more especially the society of Madame de la Chanterie. There was a great void in his soul. He had already acquired certain habits of mind, and he could not remember ever having felt such keen



regrets for anything in his previous life. This comparison, brief as it was, made a great impression on his mind; he understood that no life he could lead could compare with that he was about to embrace, and his determination to follow in the steps of good Father Alain was thenceforth unchangeable. If he had not the vocation, he had the will.

Next morning, Godefroid, whose new way of life accustomed him to rising very early, saw, out of his window, a youth of about seventeen, wearing a blouse, and coming in evidently from a public fountain, carrying in each hand a pitcher full of water. The lad's face, not knowing that any one could see him, betrayed his thoughts; and never had Godefroid seen one more guileless and more sad. The charm of youth was depressed by misery, study, and great physical fatigue. Monsieur Bernard's grandson was remarkable for an excessively white skin, in strong contrast to very dark brown hair. He made three expeditions; and the third time he saw a load of wood being delivered which Godefroid had ordered the night before; for the winter, though late, of 1838 was beginning to be felt, and there had been a slight fall of snow in the night.

Népomucène, who had just begun his day's work by fetching this wood, on which Madame Vauthier had already levied heavy toll, stood talking to the youth while waiting till the sawyer had cut up the logs for him to take indoors. It was very evident that the sight of this wood, and of the ominous gray sky, had reminded the lad of the desirability of laying in some fuel. And then suddenly, as if reproaching himself for waste of time, he took up the pitchers and hurried into the house. It was indeed half-past seven; and as he heard the quarters strike by the clock at the Convent of the Visitation, he reflected that he had to be at the College Louis-le-Grand by half-past eight.

At the moment when the young man went in, Godefroid opened his door to Madame Vauthier, who was bringing up some live charcoal to her new lodger; so it happened that he

witnessed a scene that took place on the landing. A gardener living in the neighborhood, after ringing several times at Monsieur Bernard's door without arousing anybody, for the bell was muffled in paper, had a rough dispute with the youth, insisting on the money due for the hire of plants which he had supplied. As the creditor raised his voice, Monsieur Bernard came out.

"Auguste," said he to his grandson, "get dressed. It is time to be off."

He himself took the pitchers and carried them into the anteroom of his apartment, where Godefroid could see stands filled with flowers; then he closed the door and came outside to talk to the nurseryman. Godefroid's door was ajar, for Népomucène was passing in and out and piling up the logs in the second room. The gardener had become silent when Monsieur Bernard appeared, wrapped in a purple silk dressing-gown, buttoned to the chin, and looking really imposing.

"You might ask for the money we owe you without shouting," said the gentleman.

"Be just, my dear sir," replied the gardener. "You were to pay me week by week, and now, for three months—ten weeks—I have had no money, and you owe me a hundred and twenty francs. We are accustomed to hire out our plants to rich people, who give us our money as soon as we ask for it, and I have called here five times. We have our rent to pay and our workmen, and I am no richer than you are. My wife, who used to supply you with milk and eggs, will not call this morning either; you owe her thirty francs, and she would rather not come at all than come to nag, for she has a good heart, has my wife! If I listened to her, trade would never pay.—And that is why I came, you understand, for that is not my way of looking at things, you see—"

Just then out came Auguste, dressed in a miserable green cloth coat, and trousers of the same, a black cravat and shabby boots. These clothes, though brushed with

care, revealed the very last extremity of poverty, for they were too short and too tight, so that they looked as if the least movement on the lad's part would split them. The whitened seams, the dog's-eared corners, the worn-out buttonholes, in spite of mending, betrayed to the least practiced eye the stigmata of poverty. This garb contrasted painfully with the youthfulness of the wearer, who went off eating a piece of stale bread, in which his fine strong teeth left their mark. This was his breakfast, eaten as he made his way from the Boulevard du Mont-Parnasse to the Rue Saint-Jacques, with his books and papers under his arm, and on his head a cap far too small for his powerful head and his mass of fine dark hair.

As he passed his grandfather, they exchanged rapid glances of deep dejection; for he saw that the old man was in almost irremediable difficulties, of which the consequences might be terrible. To make way for the student of philosophy, the gardener retreated as far as Godefroid's door; and at the moment when he reached the door, Népomucène, with a load of wood, came up to the landing, driving the creditor quite to the window.

"Monsieur Bernard," exclaimed the widow, "do you suppose that Monsieur Godefroid took these rooms for you to hold meetings in?"

"I beg pardon, Madame," replied the nurseryman, "the landing was crowded—"

"I did not mean it for you, Monsieur Cartier," said the woman.

"Stay here!" cried Godefroid, addressing the nurseryman.—"And you, my dear sir," he added, turning to Monsieur Bernard, whom this insolent remark left unmoved, "if it suits you to settle matters with your gardener in my room, pray come in."

The old gentleman, stupefied with trouble, gave Godefroid a stony look, which conveyed a thousand thanks.

"As for you, my dear Madame Vauthier, do not be so rough to Monsieur, who, in the first place, is an old man,



and to whom you also owe your thanks for having me as your lodger."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the woman.

"Besides, if poor folk do not help each other, who is to help them?—Leave us, Madame Vauthier; I can blow up my own fire. See to having my wood stowed in your cellar; I have no doubt you will take good care of it."

Madame Vauthier vanished; for Godefroid, by placing his fuel in her charge, had afforded pasture to her greed.

"Come in," said Godefroid, signing to the gardener, and setting two chairs for the debtor and creditor. The old man talked standing; the tradesman took a seat.

"Come, my good man," Godefroid went on, "the rich do not always pay so punctually as you say they do, and you should not dun a worthy gentleman for a few louis. Monsieur draws his pension every six months, and he cannot give you a draft in anticipation for so small a sum; but I will advance the money if you insist on it."

"Monsieur Bernard drew his pension about three weeks since, and he did not pay me. I should be very sorry to annoy him—"

"What, and you have been supplying him with flowers for—"

"Yes, Monsieur, for six years, and he has always paid until now."

Monsieur Bernard, who was listening to all that might be going on in his own lodgings, and paying no heed to this discussion, heard screams through the partition, and hurried away in alarm, without saying a word.

"Come, come, my good man, bring some fine flowers, your best flowers, this very morning, to Monsieur Bernard, and let your wife send in some fresh eggs and milk; I will pay you myself this evening."

Cartier looked somewhat askance at Godefroid.

"Well, I suppose you know more about it than Madame Vauthier; she sent me word that I had better look sharp if I meant to be paid," said he. "Neither she nor I, sir, can

account for it when people who live on bread, who pick up odds and ends of vegetables, and bits of carrot and potatoes, and turnip outside the eating-house doors—yes, sir, I have seen the boy filling a little basket—well, when those people spend near on a hundred francs a month on flowers. The old man, they say, has but three thousand francs a year for his pension—”

“At any rate,” said Godefroid, “if they ruin themselves in flowers, it is not for you to complain.”

“Certainly not, sir, so long as I am paid.”

“Bring me your bill.”

“Very good, sir,” said the gardener, with rather more respect. “You hope to see the lady they hide so carefully, no doubt?”

“Come, come, my good fellow, you forget yourself,” said Godefroid stiffly. “Go home and pick out your best flowers to replace those you are taking away. If you can supply me with rich milk and new-laid eggs, you may have my custom. I will go this morning and look at your place.”

“It is one of the best in Paris, and I exhibit at the Luxembourg shows. I have three acres of garden on the boulevard, just behind that of the Grande-Chaumière.”

“Very good, Monsieur Cartier. You are richer than I am, I can see. So have some consideration for us; for who knows but that one day we may need each other.”

The nurseryman departed, much puzzled as to what Godefroid could be.

“And time was when I was just like that!” said Godefroid to himself, as he blew the fire. “What a perfect specimen of the commonplace citizen; a gossip, full of curiosity, possessed by the idea of equality, but jealous of other dealers; furious at not knowing why a poor invalid stays in her room and is never seen; secretive as to his profits, but vain enough to let out the secret if he could crow over his neighbor. Such a man ought to be lieutenant at least of his crew. How easily and how often in every age does

the scene of Monsieur Dimanche recur! Another minute, and Cartier would have been my sworn ally!"

The old man's return interrupted this soliloquy, which shows how greatly Godefroid's ideas had changed during the past four months.

"I beg your pardon," said Monsieur Bernard, in a husky voice, "I see you have sent off the nurseryman quite satisfied, for he bowed politely. In fact, my young friend, Providence seems to have sent you here for our express benefit at the very moment when all seemed at an end. Alas! The man's chatter must have told you many things.—It is quite true that I drew my half-year's pension a fortnight since; but I had other and more pressing debts, and I was obliged to keep back the money for the rent or be turned out of doors. You, to whom I have confided the secret of my daughter's state—who have heard her—"

He looked anxiously at Godefroid, who nodded affirmation.

"Well, you can judge if that would not be her death-blow. For I should have to place her in a hospital.—My grandson and I have been dreading this day, not that Cartier was our chief fear; it is the cold—"

"My dear Monsieur Bernard, I have plenty of wood; take some!" cried Godefroid.

"But how can I ever repay such kindness?" said the old man.

"By accepting it without ceremony," answered Godefroid cordially, "and by giving me your entire confidence."

"But what claims have I on such generosity?" asked Monsieur Bernard with revived suspicions. "My pride and my grandson's is broken!" he exclaimed. "For we have already fallen so far as to argue with our two or three creditors. The very poor can have no creditors. Only those can owe money who keep up a certain external display which we have utterly lost.—But I have not yet lost my common-sense, my reason," he added, as if speaking to himself.



"Monsieur," said Godefroid gravely, "the story you told me yesterday would draw tears from a usurer—"

"No, no! for Barbet the publisher, our landlord, speculates on my poverty, and sets his old servant, the woman Vauthier, to spy it out."

"How can he speculate on it?" asked Godefroid.

"I will tell you at another time," replied the old man. "My daughter may be feeling cold, and since you are so kind, and since I am in a situation to accept charity, even if it were from my worst enemy—"

"I will carry the wood," said Godefroid, who went across the landing with half a score of logs, which he laid down in his neighbor's outer room.

Monsieur Bernard had taken an equal number, and when he beheld this little stock of fuel, he could not conceal the simple, almost idiotic, smile by which men rescued from mortal and apparently inevitable danger express their joy, for there still is fear even in their belief.

"Accept all I can give you, my dear Monsieur Bernard, without hesitation, and when we have saved your daughter, and you are happy once more, I will explain everything. Till then leave everything to me.—I went to call on the Jewish doctor, but unfortunately Halpersohn is absent; he will not be back for two days."

Just then a voice which sounded to Godefroid, and which really was, sweet and youthful, called out, "Papa, papa!" in an expressive tone.

While talking to the old man, Godefroid had already remarked, through the crack of the door opposite to that on the landing, lines of neat white paint, showing that the sick woman's room must be very different from the others that composed the lodging. His curiosity was now raised to the highest pitch; the errand of mercy was to him no more than a means; its end was to see the invalid. He would not believe that any one who spoke in such a voice could be horrible to behold.

"You are taking too much trouble, papa," said the

voice. "Why do not you have more servants—at your age?—Dear me!"

"But you know, dear Vanda, that I will not allow any one to wait on you but myself or your boy."

These two sentences, which Godefroid overheard, though with some difficulty, for a curtain dulled the sound, made him understand the case. The sick woman, surrounded by every luxury, knew nothing of the real state in which her father and son lived. Monsieur Bernard's silk wrapper, the flowers, and his conversation with Cartier had already roused Godefroid's suspicions, and he stood riveted, almost confounded, by this marvel of paternal devotion. The contrast between the invalid's room as he imagined it and what he saw was in fact amazing. The reader may judge—

Through the door of a third room which stood open, Godefroid saw two narrow beds of painted wood like those of the vilest lodging-houses, with a straw mattress and a thin upper mattress; on each there was but one blanket. A small iron stove such as porters use to cook on, with a few lumps of dried fuel by the side of it, was enough to show the destitution of the owner, without other details in keeping with this wretched stove.

Godefroid by one step forward could see the pots and pans of the wretched household—glazed earthenware jars, in which a few potatoes were soaking in dirty water. Two tables of blackened wood, covered with papers and books, stood in front of a window looking out on the Rue Notre-Dame des Champs, and showed how the father and son occupied themselves in the evening. On each table there was a candlestick of wrought iron of the poorest description, and in them candles of the cheapest kind, eight to the pound. On a third table, which served as a dresser, there were two shining sets of silver-gilt forks and spoons, some plates, a basin and cup in Sèvres china, and a knife with a gilt handle lying in a case, all evidently for the invalid's use.

The stove was alight; the water in the kettle was steaming gently. A wardrobe of painted deal contained no doubt

the lady's linen and possessions, for he saw on her father's bed the clothes he had worn the day before, spread by way of a covering.

Some other rags laid in the same way on his grandson's bed led him to conclude that this was all their wardrobe; and under the bed he saw their shoes. The floor, swept but seldom no doubt, was like that of a schoolroom. A large loaf that had been cut was visible on a shelf over the table. In short, it was poverty in the last stage of squalor, poverty reduced to a system, with the decent order of a determination to endure it; driven poverty that has to do everything at home, that insists on doing it, but that finds it impossible, and so puts every poor possession to a wrong use. A strong and sickening smell pervaded the room, which evidently was but rarely cleaned.

The anteroom where Godefroid stood was at any rate decent, and he guessed that it commonly served to hide the horrors of the room inhabited by the old man and the youth. This room, hung with a Scotch plaid paper, had four walnut-wood chairs and a small table, and was graced with portraits—a colored print of Horace Vernet's picture of the Emperor; those of Louis XVIII. and Charles X.; and one of Prince Poniatowski, a friend no doubt of Monsieur Bernard's father-in-law. There were cotton window-curtains bound with red and finished with fringe.

Godefroid, keeping an eye on Népomucène, and hearing him come up with a load of wood, signed to him to stack it noiselessly in Monsieur Bernard's anteroom; and, with a delicate feeling that showed he was making good progress, he shut the bedroom door that Madame Vauthier's boy might not see the old man's squalor.

The anteroom was partly filled up by three flower-stands full of splendid plants, two oval and one round, all three of rosewood, and elegantly finished; and Népomucène, as he placed the logs on the floor, could not help saying—

“Isn't that lovely?—It must cost a pretty penny!”



"Jean, do not make too much noise—" Monsieur Bernard called out.

"There, you hear him?" said Népomucène to Godefroid, "the poor old boy is certainly cracked!"

"And what will you be at his age?"

"Oh, I know sure enough!" said Népomucène; "I shall be in a sugar-basin."

"In a sugar-basin?"

"Yes, my bones will have been made into charcoal. I have seen the sugar-boilers' carts often enough at Mont Souris come to fetch bone-black for their works, and they told me they used it in making sugar." And with this philosophical reply, he went off for another basketful of wood.

Godefroid quietly closed Monsieur Bernard's door, leaving him alone with his daughter.

Mme. Vauthier had meanwhile prepared her new lodger's breakfast, and came with Félicité to serve it. Godefroid, lost in meditation, was staring at the fire on the hearth. He was absorbed in reflecting on this poverty that included so many different forms of misery, though he perceived that it had its pleasures too; the ineffable joys and triumphs of fatherly and of filial devotion. They were like pearls sewn on sackcloth.

"What romance—even the most famous—can compare with such reality?" thought he. "How noble is the life that mingles with such lives as these, enabling the soul to discern their cause and effect; to assuage suffering and encourage what is good; to become one with misfortune and learn the secrets of such a home as this; to be an actor in ever-new dramas such as delight us in the works of the most famous authors!—I had no idea that goodness could be more interesting than vice."

"Is everything to your mind, sir?" asked Madame Vauthier, who, helped by Félicité, had placed the table close to Godefroid. He then saw an excellent cup of coffee with milk, a smoking hot omelet, fresh butter, and little red radishes.

"Where did you find those radishes?" asked Godefroid.

"Monsieur Cartier gave them to me," said she. "I thought you might like them, sir."

"And what do you expect me to pay for a breakfast like this every day?" said Godefroid.

"Well, Monsieur, to be quite fair—it would be hard to supply it under thirty sous."

"Say thirty sous," said Godefroid. "But how is it that close by this, at Madame Machillot's, they only ask me forty-five francs a month for dinner, which is just thirty sous a day?"

"Oh, but what a difference, sir, between getting a dinner for fifteen people and going to buy everything that is needed for one breakfast: a roll, you see, eggs, butter—lighting the fire—and then sugar, milk, coffee.—Why, they will ask you sixteen sous for nothing but a cup of coffee with milk in the Place de l'Odéon, and you have to give a sou or two to the waiter!—Here you have no trouble at all; you breakfast at home, in your slippers."

"Well, then it is settled," said Godefroid.

"And even then, but for Madame Cartier, from whom I get the milk and eggs and parsley, I could not do it at all.—You must go and see their place, sir. Oh, it is really a fine sight. They employ five gardeners' apprentices, and Népomucène goes to help with the watering all the summer; they pay me to let him go. And they make a lot of money out of strawberries and melons.—You are very much interested in Monsieur Bernard, it would seem?" asked the widow in her sweetest tones. "For really to answer for their debts in that way!—But perhaps you don't know how much they owe.—There is the lady that keeps the circulating library on the Place Saint-Michel; she calls every three or four days for thirty francs, and she wants it badly too. Heaven above! that poor woman in bed does read and read. And at two sous a volume, thirty francs in two months—"

"Is a hundred volumes a month," said Godefroid.

"There goes the old fellow to fetch Madame's cream and

roll," the woman went on. "It is for her tea; for she lives on nothing but tea, that lady; she has it twice a day, and then twice a week she wants sweets.—She is dainty, I can tell you! The old boy buys her cakes and tarts at the pastry-cook's in the Rue de Buci. Oh, when it is for her, he sticks at nothing. He says she is his daughter!—Where's the man who would do all he does, and at his age, for his daughter? He is killing himself—himself and his Auguste—and all for her.—If you are like me, sir—I would give twenty francs to see her. Monsieur Berton says she is shocking, an object to make a show of.—They did well to come to this part of the town where nobody ever comes.—And you think of dining at Madame Machillot's, sir?"

"Yes, I thought of making an arrangement with her."

"Well, sir, it is not to interfere with any plan of yours; but, take 'em as you find 'em, you will find a better eating-place in the Rue de Tournon; you need not bind yourself for a month, and you will have a better table—"

"Where in the Rue de Tournon?"

"At the successors of old Madame Girard. That is where the gentlemen upstairs dine, and they are satisfied—they could not be better pleased."

"Very well, Madame Vauthier, I will take your advice and dine there."

"And, my dear sir," the woman went on, emboldened by the easy-going air which Godefroid had intentionally assumed, "do you mean to say, seriously, that you are such a flat as to think of paying Monsieur Bernard's debts?—I should be really very sorry; for you must remember, my good Monsieur Godefroid, that he is very near on seventy, and after him where are you? There's an end to his pension. What will there be to repay you? Young men are so rash. Do you know that he owes above a thousand crowns?"

"But to whom?" asked Godefroid.

"Oh, that is no concern of mine," said Madame Vauthier



mysteriously. "He owes the money, and that's enough; and between you and me, he is having a hard time of it; he cannot get credit for a sou in all the neighborhood for that very reason."

"A thousand crowns!" said Godefroid. "Be sure of one thing; if I had a thousand crowns, I should be no lodger of yours. But I, you see, cannot bear to see others suffering; and for a few hundred francs that it may cost me, I will make sure that my neighbor, a man with white hair, has bread and firing. Why, a man often loses as much at cards.—But three thousand francs—why, what do you think? Good Heavens!"

Madame Vauthier, quite taken in by Godefroid's affected candor, allowed a gleam of satisfaction to light up her face, and this confirmed her lodger's suspicions. Godefroid was convinced that the old woman was implicated in some plot against the hapless Monsieur Bernard.

"It is a strange thing, Monsieur, what fancies come into one's head. You will say that I am very inquisitive; but yesterday, when I saw you talking to Monsieur Bernard, it struck me that you must be a publisher's clerk—for this is their part of the town. I had a lodger, a foreman printer, whose works are in the Rue de Vaugirard, and he was named the same name as you—"

"And what concern is it of yours what my business is?" said Godefroid.

"Lor'! whether you tell me or whether you don't, I shall know just the same," said the widow. "Look at Monsieur Bernard, for instance. Well, for eighteen months I could never find out what he was; but in the nineteenth month I discovered that he had been a judge or a magistrate, or something of the kind, in the law, and that now he is writing a book about it. What does he get by it? That's what I say. And if he had told me, I should have held my tongue; so there!"

"I am not at present a publisher's agent, but I may be, perhaps, before long."

"There, I knew it!" exclaimed the woman eagerly, and turning from the bed she was making as an excuse to stay chattering to her lodger. "You have come to cut the ground from under— Well, well, 'a nod's as good as a wink'—"

"Hold hard!" cried Godefroid, standing between Madame Vauthier and the door. "Now, tell me, what are you paid to meddle in this?"

"Hey day!" cried the old woman, with a keen look at Godefroid. "You are pretty sharp after all!"

She shut and locked the outer door; then she came back and sat down by the fire.

"On my word and honor, as sure as my name is Vauthier, I took you for a student till I saw you giving your logs to old Father Bernard. My word, but you're a sharp one! By the Piper! you can play a part well! I thought you were a perfect flat. Now, will you promise me a thousand francs? For as sure as the day above us, old Barbet and Monsieur Métivier have promised me five hundred if I keep my eyes open."

"What? Not they! Two hundred at the very outside, my good woman, and only promised at that—and you cannot summons them for payment!—Look here; if you will put me in a position to get the job they are trying to manage with Monsieur Bernard, I will give you four hundred!—Come, now, what are they up to?"

"Well, they have paid him fifteen hundred francs on account for his work, and made him sign a bill for a thousand crowns. They doled it out to him a hundred francs at a time, contriving to keep him as poor as poor.—They set the duns upon him; they sent Cartier, you may wager."

At this, Godefroid, by a look of cynical perspicacity that he shot at the woman, made it clear to her that he quite understood the game she was playing for her landlord's benefit. Her speech threw a light on two sides of the question, for it also explained the rather strange scene between the gardener and himself.

"Oh, yes!" she went on, "they have him fast; for where

is he ever to find a thousand crowns! They intend to offer him five hundred francs when the work is in their hands complete, and five hundred francs per volume as they are brought out for sale. The business is all in the name of a bookseller these gentlemen have set up in business on the Quai des Augustins—”

“Oh, yes—that little—what’s-his-name?”

“Yes, that’s your man.—Morand, formerly Monsieur Barbet’s agent.—There is a heap of money to be got out of it, it would seem.”

“There will be a heap of money to put into it,” said Godefroid, with an expressive grimace.

There was a gentle knock at the door, and Godefroid, very glad of the interruption, rose to open it.

“All this is between you and me, Mother Vauthier,” said Godefroid, seeing Monsieur Bernard.

“Monsieur Bernard,” cried she, “I have a letter for you.”

The old man went down a few steps.

“No, no, I have no letter for you, Monsieur Bernard; I only wished to warn you against that young fellow there. He is a publisher.”

“Oh, that accounts for everything,” said the old man to himself. And he came back to his neighbor’s room with a quite altered countenance.

The calmly cold expression on Monsieur Bernard’s face when he reappeared was in such marked contrast to the frank and friendly manner his gratitude had lent him that Godefroid was struck by so sudden a change.

“Monsieur, forgive me for disturbing your solitude, but you have since yesterday loaded me with favors, and a benefactor confers rights on those whom he obliges.”

Godefroid bowed.

“I, who for five years have suffered once a fortnight the torments of the Redeemer; I, who for six-and-thirty years was the representative of Society and the Government, who was then the arm of public vengeance, and who, as you may suppose, have no illusions left—nothing, nothing but suffer-



ings.—Well, Monsieur, your careful attention in closing the door of the dog-kennel in which my grandson and I sleep—that trifling act was to me the cup of water of which Bossuet speaks. I found in my heart, my worn-out heart, which is as dry of tears as my withered body is of sweat, the last drop of that elixir which in youth leads us to see the best side of every human action, and I came to offer you my hand, which I never give to any one but my daughter; I came to bring you the heavenly rose of belief, even now, in goodness.”

“Monsieur Bernard,” said Godefroid, remembering good old Alain’s injunctions, “I did nothing with a view to winning your gratitude.—You are under a mistake.”

“That is frank and aboveboard,” said the old lawyer. “Well, that is what I like. I was about to reproach you. Forgive me; I esteem you.—So you are a publisher, and you want to get my book in preference to Messieurs Barbet, Métivier, and Morand?—That explains all. You are prepared to deal with me as they were; only you do it with a good grace.”

“Old Vauthier has just told you, I suppose, that I am a publisher’s agent?”

“Yes,” said he.

“Well, Monsieur Bernard, before I can say what we are prepared to *pay* more than those gentlemen *offer*, I must understand on what terms you stand with them.”

“Very true,” said the old man, who seemed delighted to find himself the object of a competition by which he could not fail to benefit. “Do you know what the work is?”

“No; I only know that there is something to be made by it.”

“It is only half-past nine; my daughter has had her breakfast, my grandson Auguste will not come in till a quarter to eleven. Cartier will not be here with the flowers for an hour—we have time to talk, Monsieur—Monsieur who?”

“Godefroid.”

"Monsieur Godefroid.—The book in question was planned by me in 1825, at a time when the Ministry, struck by the constant reduction of personal estate, drafted the Law of Entail and Seniority which was thrown out. I had observed many defects in our codes and in the fundamental principle of French law. The codes have been the subject of many important works; but all those treatises are essentially on jurisprudence; no one has been so bold as to study the results of the Revolution—or of Napoleon's rule, if you prefer it—as a whole, analyzing the spirit of these laws and the working of their application. That is, in general terms, the purpose of my book. I have called it the 'Spirit of the Modern Laws.' It covers organic law as well as the codes—all the codes, for we have five! My book, too, is in five volumes, and a sixth volume of authorities, quotations, and references. I have still three months' work before me.

"The owner of this house, a retired publisher, scented a speculation. I, in the first instance, thought only of benefiting my country. This Barbet has got the better of me.—You will wonder how a publisher could entrap an old lawyer; but you, Monsieur, know my history, and this man is a money-lender. He has the sharp eye and the knowledge of the world that such men must have. His advances have just kept pace with my necessity; he has always come in at the very moment when despair has made me a defenceless prey."

"Not at all, my dear sir," said Godefroid. "He has simply kept Madame Vauthier as a spy.—But the terms. Tell me honestly."

"They advanced me fifteen hundred francs, represented at the present rates by three bills for a thousand francs each, and these three thousand francs are secured to them by a lien on the property of my book, which I cannot dispose of elsewhere till I have paid off the bills; the bills have been protested; judgment has been pronounced.—Here, Monsieur, you see the complications of poverty.

"At the most moderate estimate, the first edition of this

vast work, the result of ten years' labor and thirty-six years' experience, will be well worth ten thousand francs.—Well, just five days since, Morand offered me a thousand crowns and my note of hand paid off for all rights.—As I could never find three thousand two hundred and forty francs, unless you intervene between us, I must yield.

"They would not take my word of honor; for further security they insisted on bills of exchange which have been protested, and I shall be imprisoned for debt. If I pay up, these money-lenders will have doubled their loan; if I deal with them, they will make a fortune, for one of them was a papermaker, and God only knows how low they can keep the price of materials. And then, with my name to it, they know that they are certain of a sale of ten thousand copies."

"Why, Monsieur—you, a retired Judge—!"

"What can I say? I have not a friend, no one remembers me!—And yet I saved many heads even if I sentenced many to fall!—And then there is my daughter, my daughter whose nurse and companion I am, for I work only at night.—Ah! young man, none but the wretched should be set to judge the wretched. I see now that of yore I was too severe."

"I do not ask you your name, Monsieur. I have not a thousand crowns at my disposal, especially if I pay Halpersohn and your little bills; but I can save you if you will pledge your word not to dispose of your book without due notice to me; it is impossible to embark in so important a matter without consulting professional experts. The persons I work for are powerful, and I can promise you success if you can promise me perfect secrecy, even from your children—and keep your word."

"The only success I care for is my poor Vanda's recovery; for, I assure you, the sight of such sufferings extinguishes every other feeling in a father's heart; the loss of fame is nothing to the man who sees a grave yawning at his feet—"

"I will call on you this evening. Halpersohn may come



home at any moment, and I go every day to see if he has returned.—I will spend to-day in your service.”

“Oh, if you could bring about my daughter’s recovery, Monsieur ——, Monsieur, I would make you a present of my book!”

“But,” said Godefroid, “I am not a publisher.”

The old man started with surprise.

“I could not help letting old Vauthier think so for the sake of ascertaining what snares had been laid for you.”

“But who are you, then?”

“Godefroid,” was the reply; “and as you have allowed me to supply you with the means of living better,” added the young man, smiling, “you may call me Godefroid de Bouillon.”

The old lawyer was too much touched to laugh at the jest. He held out his hand to Godefroid and grasped the young man’s warmly.

“You wish to remain unknown?” said Monsieur Bernard, looking at Godefroid with melancholy, mixed with some uneasiness.

“If you will allow me.”

“Well, do as you think proper.—And come in this evening; you will see my daughter, if her state allows.”

This was evidently the greatest concession the poor father could make; and seeing Godefroid’s grateful look, the old man had the pleasure of feeling that he was understood.

An hour later Cartier came back with some beautiful flowers, replanted the stands with his own hands in fresh moss, and Godefroid paid the bill, as he did the subscription to the lending library, for which the account was sent in soon after. Books and flowers were the staff of life to this poor sick, or rather tormented, woman, who could live on so little food.

As he thought of this family in the coils of disaster, like that of Laocoon—a sublime allegory of many lives!—Gode-

froid, making his way leisurely on foot to the Rue Marbeuf, felt in his heart that he was curious rather than benevolent. The idea of the sick woman, surrounded with luxuries in the midst of abject squalor, made him forget the horrible details of the strange nervous malady, which is happily an extraordinary exception, though abundantly proved by various historians. One of our gossiping chronicle writers, Tallemant des Réaux, mentions an instance. We like to think of women as elegant even in their worst sufferings, and Godefroid promised himself some pleasure in penetrating into the room which only the physician, the father, and the son had entered for six years past. However, he ended by reproaching himself for his curiosity. The neophyte even understood that his feeling, however natural, would die out by degrees as he carried out his merciful errands, by dint of seeing new homes and new sorrows. Such messengers, in fact, attain to a heavenly benignity which nothing can shock or amaze, just as in love we attain to a sublime quiescence of feeling in the conviction of its strength and duration, by a constant habit of submission and sweetness.

Godefroid was told that Halpersohn had come home during the night, but had been obliged to go out in his carriage the first thing in the morning to see the patients who were waiting for him. The woman at the gate told Godefroid to come back next morning before nine.

Remembering Monsieur Alain's advice as to parsimony in his personal expenses, Godefroid dined for twenty-five sous in the Rue de Tournon, and was rewarded for his self-denial by finding himself among compositors and proof-readers. He heard a discussion about the cost of production, and, joining in, picked up the information that an octavo volume of forty sheets, of which a thousand copies were printed, would not cost more than thirty sous per copy under favorable circumstances. He determined on going to inquire the price commonly asked for such volumes on sale at the law publishers, so as to be in a position to dis-

pute the point with the publishers who had got a hold on Monsieur Bernard, if he should happen to meet them.

At about seven in the evening he came back to the Boulevard Mont-Parnasse along the Rue de Vaugirard, the Rue Madame, and the Rue de l'Ouest, and he saw how deserted that part of the town is, for he met nobody. It is true that the cold was severe, snow fell in large flakes, and the carts made no noise on the stones.

"Ah, here you are, Monsieur!" said Madame Vauthier when she saw him. "If I had known you would come in so early, I would have lighted your fire."

"It is unnecessary," replied Godefroid, as the woman followed him; "I am going to spend the evening with Monsieur Bernard."

"Ah! very good. You are cousins, I suppose, that you are hand and glove with him by the second day. I thought perhaps you would have liked to finish what we were saying—"

"Oh, about the four hundred francs?" said Godefroid in an undertone. "Look here, Mother Vauthier, you would have had them this evening if you had said nothing to Monsieur Bernard. You want to hunt with the hounds and run with the hare, and you will get neither; for, so far as I am concerned, you have spoiled my game—my chances are altogether ruined—"

"Don't you believe that, my good sir. To-morrow, when you are at breakfast—"

"Oh, to-morrow I must be off at daybreak like your authors."

Godefroid's past experience and life as a dandy and journalist had been so far of use to him as to lead him to guess that, if he did not take this line, Barbet's spy would warn the publisher that there was something in the wind, and he would then take such steps as would ere long endanger Monsieur Bernard's liberty; whereas, by leaving the three usurious negotiators to believe that their schemes were not in peril, they would keep quiet.



But Godefroid was not yet a match for Parisian humanity when it assumes the guise of a Madame Vauthier. This woman meant to have Godefroid's money and her landlord's too. She flew off to Monsieur Barbet, while Godefroid changed his dress to call on Monsieur Bernard's daughter.

Eight o'clock was striking at the Convent of the Visitation, whose clock regulated the life of the whole neighborhood, when Godefroid, full of curiosity, knocked at his friend's door. Auguste opened it; as it was Saturday, the lad spent his evening at home; Godefroid saw that he wore a jacket of black velvet, black trousers that were quite decent, and a blue silk tie; but his surprise at seeing the youth so unlike his usual self ceased when he entered the invalid's room. He at once understood the necessity for the father and the boy to be presentably dressed.

The walls of the room, hung with yellow silk, panelled with bright green cord, made the room look extremely cheerful; the cold, tiled floor was covered by a flowered carpet on a white ground. The two windows, with their handsome curtains lined with white silk, were like bowers, the flower-stands were so full of beauty, and blinds hindered them from being seen from outside in a quarter where such lavishness was rare. The woodwork, painted white, and varnished, was touched up with gold lines. A heavy curtain, embroidered in tent stitch, with grotesque foliage on a yellow ground, hung over the door and deadened every sound from outside. This splendid curtain had been worked by the invalid, who embroidered like a fairy when she had the use of her hands.

Opposite the door, at the further end of the room, the chimney-shelf, covered with green velvet, had a set of very costly ornaments, the only relic of the wealth of the two families. There was a very curious clock; an elephant supporting a porcelain tower filled with beautiful flowers; two candelabra in the same style, and some valuable Oriental pieces. The fender, the dogs, and fire-irons were all of the finest workmanship.

The largest of the three flower-stands stood in the middle of the room, and above it hung a porcelain chandelier of floral design.

The bed on which the judge's daughter lay was one of those fine examples of carved wood, painted white and gold, that were made in the time of Louis XV. By the invalid's pillow was a pretty inlaid table, on which were the various objects necessary for a life spent in bed; a bracket light for two candles was fixed to the wall, and could be turned backward and forward by a touch. In front of her was a bed-table, wonderfully contrived for her convenience. The bed was covered with a magnificent counterpane, and draped with curtains looped back in festoons; it was loaded with books and a work-basket, and among these various objects Godefroid would hardly have discovered the sick woman but for the tapers in the two candle-branches.

There seemed to be nothing of her but a very white face, darkly marked round the eyes by much suffering; her eyes shone like fire; and her principal ornament was her splendid black hair, of which the heavy curls, set out in bunches of numerous ringlets, showed that the care and arrangement of her hair occupied part of the invalid's day; a movable mirror at the foot of the bed confirmed the idea.

No kind of modern elegance was lacking, and a few trifling toys for poor Vanda's amusement showed that her father's affection verged on mania.

The old man rose from a very handsome easy-chair of Louis XV. style, white and gold, and covered with needle-work, and went forward a few steps to welcome Godefroid, who certainly would not have recognized him; for his cold, stern face had assumed the gay expression peculiar to old men who have preserved their dignity of manner and the superficial frivolity of courtiers. His purple wadded dressing-gown was in harmony with the luxury about him, and he took snuff out of a gold box set with diamonds.

"Here, my dear," said Monsieur Bernard to his daughter, "is our neighbor of whom I spoke to you." And he

signed to his grandson to bring forward one of two arm-chairs, in the same style as his own, which were standing on each side of the fire.

"Monsieur's name is Godefroid, and he is most kind in standing on no ceremony—"

Vanda's head moved in acknowledgment of Godefroid's low bow; and by the movement of her throat as it bent and unbent, he discovered that all this woman's vitality was seated in her head. Her emaciated arms and lifeless hands lay on the fine white sheet like objects quite apart from the body, and that seemed to fill no space in the bed. The things needed for her use were on a set of shelves behind the bed, and screened by a silk curtain.

"You, my dear sir, are the first person, excepting only the doctors—who have ceased to be men to me—whom I have set eyes on for six years; so you can have no idea of the interest I have felt in you ever since my father told me you were coming to call on us. It was passionate, unquarable curiosity, like that of our mother Eve. My father, who is so good to me; my son, of whom I am so fond; are undoubtedly enough to fill up the vacuum of a soul now almost bereft of body; but that soul is still a woman's after all! I recognized that in the childish joy I felt in the idea of your visit.—You will do us the pleasure of taking a cup of tea with us, I hope?"

"Yes, Monsieur Godefroid has promised us the pleasure of his company for the evening," said the old man, with the air of a millionaire doing the honors of his house.

Auguste, seated in a low, worsted-work chair by a small table of inlaid wood, finished with brass moldings, was reading by the light of the wax-candles on the chimney-shelf.

"Auguste, my dear, tell Jean to bring tea in an hour's time."

She spoke with some pointed meaning, and Auguste replied by a nod.

"Will you believe, Monsieur, that for the past six years no one has waited on me but my father and my boy, and



I could not endure anybody else. If I were to lose them, I should die of it.—My father will not even allow Jean, a poor old Normandy peasant who has lived with us for thirty years—will not even let him come into the room.”

“I should think not, indeed!” said the old man readily. “Monsieur Godefroid has seen him; he saws and brings in the wood, he cooks and runs errands, and wears a dirty apron; he would have made hay of all these pretty things, which are so necessary to my poor child, to whom this elegance is second nature.”

“Indeed, Madame, your father is quite right—”

“But why?” she urged. “If Jean had damaged my room, my father would have renewed it.”

“Of course, my child; but what would have prevented me is the fact that you cannot leave it; and you have no idea what Paris workmen are. It would take them more than three months to restore your room. Only think of the dust that would come out of your carpet if it were taken up. Let Jean do your room! Do not think of such a thing. By taking the extreme care which only your father and your boy can take, we have spared you sweeping and dust; if Jean came in to help, everything would be done for in a month.”

“It is not so much out of economy as for the sake of your health,” said Godefroid. “Monsieur your father is quite right.”

“Oh, I am not complaining,” said Vanda in a saucy tone.

Her voice had the quality of a concert; soul, action, and life were all concentrated in her eyes and her voice; for Vanda, by careful practice, for which time had certainly not been lacking, had succeeded in overcoming the difficulties arising from her loss of teeth.

“I am still happy, Monsieur, in spite of the dreadful malady that tortures me; for wealth is certainly a great help in enduring my sufferings. If we had been in poverty, I should have died eighteen years ago, and I am still alive: have many enjoyments, and they are all the keener because

I live on, triumphing over death.—You will think me a great chatterbox," she added, with a smile.

"Madame," said Godefroid, "I could beg you to talk forever, for I never heard a voice to compare with yours—it is music! Rubini is not more delightful—"

"Do not mention Rubini or the opera," said the old man sadly. "However rich we may be, it is impossible to give my daughter, who was a great musician, a pleasure to which she was devoted."

"I apologize," said Godefroid.

"You will fall into our ways," said the old man.

"This is your training," said the invalid, smiling. "When we have warned you several times by crying, 'Look out!' you will know all the blind man's buff of our conversation!"

Godefroid exchanged a swift glance with Monsieur Bernard, who, seeing tears in his new friend's eyes, put his finger to his lip as a warning not to betray the heroic devotion he and the boy had shown for the past seven years.

This devoted and unflagging imposture, proved by the invalid's entire deception, produced on Godefroid at this moment the effect of looking at a precipitous rock whence two chamois-hunters were on the point of falling.

The splendid gold and diamond snuffbox with which the old man trifled, leaning over the foot of his daughter's bed, was like the touch of genius which in a great actor wrings from us a cry of admiration. Godefroid looked at the snuffbox, wondering why it had not been sold or pawned, but he postponed the idea till he could discuss it with the old man.

"This evening, Monsieur Godefroid, my daughter was so greatly excited by the promise of your visit that the various strange symptoms of her malady which, for nearly a fortnight past, have driven us to despair, suddenly disappeared. You may imagine my gratitude!"

"And mine!" cried Vanda, in an insinuating voice, with a graceful inclination of her head. "You are a deputation from the outer world.—Since I was twenty I have not known

what a drawing-room is like, or a party, or a ball; and I love dancing, I am crazy about the play, and above all about music. Well, I imagine everything in my mind. I read a great deal, and my father tells me all about the gay world—"As he listened, Godefroid felt prompted to kneel at the feet of this poor old man.

"When he goes to the opera—and he often goes—he describes the dresses to me and all the singers. Oh! I should like to be well again; in the first place, for my father's sake, for he lives for me alone, as I live for him and through him, and then for my son's—I should like him to know another mother. Oh! Monsieur, what perfect men are my dear old father and my admirable son!—Then I could wish for health also, that I might hear Lablache, Rubini, Tamburini, Grisi, the 'Puritani' too!—But—"

"Come, my dear, compose yourself. If we talk about music, it is fatal!" said the old father, with a smile.

And that smile, which made him look younger, evidently constantly deceived the sick woman.

"Well, I will be good," said Vanda, with a saucy pout. "But let me have a harmonium."

This instrument had lately been invented; it could, by a little contrivance, be placed by the invalid's bed, and would only need the pressure of the foot to give out an organ-like tone. This instrument, in its most improved form, was as effective as a piano; but at that time it cost three hundred francs. Vanda, who read newspapers and reviews, had heard of such an instrument, and had been longing for one for two months past.

"Yes, Madame, and I can procure you one," replied Godefroid at an appealing glance from the old man. "A friend of mine who is setting out for Algiers has a very fine one, which I will borrow of him; for before buying one, you had better try it. It is quite possible that the sound, which is strongly vibrating, may be too much for you."

"Can I have it to-morrow?" she asked, with the eagerness of a Creole.



"To-morrow!" objected Monsieur Bernard. "That is very soon; besides, to-morrow will be Sunday."

"To be sure," said she, looking at Godefroid, who felt as though he saw a soul fluttering, as he admired the ubiquity of Vanda's eyes.

Until now he had never understood what the power of the voice and eyes might be when the entire vitality was concentrated in them. Her glance was more than a glance; it was a flame, or rather a blaze of divine light, a communicative ray of life and intelligence, thought made visible. The voice, with its endless intonations, supplied the place of movement, gesture, and turns of the head. And her changing color, varying like that of the fabled chameleon, made the illusion—or, if you will, the delusion—complete. That weary head, buried in a cambric pillow frilled with lace, was a complete woman.

Never in his life had Godefroid seen so noble a spectacle, and he could hardly endure his emotions. Another grand feature, where everything was strange in a situation so full of romance and of horror, was that the soul alone seemed to be living in the spectators. This atmosphere, where all was sentiment, had a celestial influence. They were as unconscious of their bodies as the woman in bed; everything was pure spirit. By dint of gazing at these frail remains of a pretty woman, Godefroid forgot the elegant luxury of the room, and felt himself in heaven. It was not till half an hour after that he noticed a whatnot covered with curiosities, over which hung a noble portrait that Vanda desired him to look at, as it was by Géricault.

"Géricault," said she, "was a native of Rouen, and his family being under some obligations to my father, who was President of the Supreme Court there, he showed his gratitude by painting that masterpiece, in which you see me at the age of sixteen."

"You have there a very fine picture," said Godefroid, "and one that is quite unknown to those who have studied the rare works of that great genius."

"To me it is no longer an object of anything but affectionate regard," said she, "since I live only by my feelings; and I have a beautiful life," she went on, looking at her father with her whole soul in her eyes. "Oh, Monsieur, if you could but know what my father is! Who would believe that the austere and dignified Judge to whom the Emperor owed so much that he gave him that snuff-box, and whom Charles X. rewarded by the gift of that Sèvres tray"—and she looked at a side-table—"that the stanch upholder of law and authority, the learned political writer, has in a heart of rock all the tenderness of a mother?—Oh, papa, papa! Come, kiss me—I insist on it—if you love me."

The old man rose, leaned over the bed, and set a kiss on his daughter's high poetic brow, for her sickly fancies were not invariably furies of affection. Then he walked up and down the room, but without a sound, for he wore slippers—the work of his daughter's hands.

"And what is your occupation?" she asked Godefroid after a pause.

"Madame, I am employed by certain pious persons to take help to the unfortunate."

"A beautiful mission!" said she. "Do you know that the idea of devoting myself to such work has often occurred to me? But what ideas have not occurred to me?" said she, with a little shake of her head. "Pain is a torch that throws light on life, and if I ever recover my health—"

"You shall enjoy yourself, my child," the old man put in.

"Certainly I long to enjoy life," said she, "but should I be able for it?—My son, I hope, will be a lawyer, worthy of his two grandfathers, and he must leave me. What is to be done?—If God restores me to life, I will dedicate it to Him.—Oh, not till I have given you both as much of it as you desire!" she exclaimed, looking at her father and her boy. "There are times, my dear father, when Monsieur de Maistre's ideas work in my brain, and I fancy I am expiating some sin."

"That is what comes of reading so much!" cried the old man, visibly grieved.

"There was that brave Polish General, my great-grandfather; he meddled very innocently in the concerns of Poland—"

"Now we have come back to Poland!" exclaimed Bernard.

"How can I help it, papa? My sufferings are intolerable, they make me hate life, and disgust me with myself. Well, what have I done to deserve them? Such an illness is not mere disordered health; it is a complete wreck of the whole constitution, and—"

"Sing the national air your poor mother used to sing; it will please Monsieur Godefroid. I have spoken to him of your voice," said her father, evidently anxious to divert his daughter's mind from the ideas she was following out.

Vanda began to sing in a low, soft voice a hymn in the Polish tongue, which left Godefroid bewildered with admiration and sadness. This melody, a good deal like the long-drawn melancholy tunes of Brittany, is one of those poetic airs that linger in the mind long after being heard. As he listened to Vanda, Godefroid at first looked at her; but he could not bear the ecstatic eyes of this remnant of a woman, now half-crazed, and he gazed at some tassels that hung on each side of the top of the bed.

"Ah, ha!" said Vanda, laughing at Godefroid's evident curiosity, "you are wondering what those are for?"

"Vanda, Vanda, be calm, my child! See, here comes the tea.—This, Monsieur, is a very expensive contrivance," he said to Godefroid. "My daughter cannot raise herself, nor can she remain in bed while it is being made and the sheets changed. Those cords work over pulleys, and by slipping a sheet of leather under her and attaching it by rings at the corners to those ropes, we can lift her without fatiguing her or ourselves."

"Yes, I am carried up—up!" said Vanda deliriously.

Auguste happily came in with a teapot, which he set on



a little table, where he also placed the Sèvres tray, covered with sandwiches and cakes. Then he brought in the cream and butter. This diverted the sick woman's mind; she had been on the verge of an attack.

"Here, Vanda, is Nathan's last novel. If you should lie awake to-night, you will have something to read."

"'Le Perle de Doll' That will be a love-story no doubt.—Auguste, what do you think? I am to have a harmonium!"

Auguste raised his head quickly, and looked strangely at his grandfather.

"You see how fond he is of his mother!" Vanda went on.—"Come and kiss me, dear rogue.—No, it is not your grandfather that you must thank, but Monsieur Godefroid; our kind neighbor promises to borrow one for me to-morrow morning.—What is it like, Monsieur?"

Godefroid, at a nod from the old man, gave a long description of the harmonium while enjoying the tea Auguste had made, which was of superior quality and delicious flavor.

At about half-past ten the visitor withdrew, quite overpowered by the frantic struggle maintained by the father and son, while admiring their heroism and the patience that enabled them, day after day, to play two equally exhausting parts.

"Now," said Monsieur Bernard, accompanying him to his own door, "now you know the life I lead! At every hour I have to endure the alarms of a robber, on the alert for everything. One word, one look might kill my daughter. One toy removed from those she is accustomed to see about her would reveal everything to her, for mind sees through walls."

"Monsieur," said Godefroid, "on Monday Halpersohn will pronounce his opinion on your daughter, for he is at home again. I doubt whether science can restore her frame."

"Oh, I do not count upon it," said the old man with a sigh. "If they will only make her life endurable.—I

trusted to your tact, Monsieur, and I want to thank you, for you understood.—Ah! the attack has come on!" cried he, hearing a scream. "She has done too much—"

He pressed Godefroid's hand and hurried away.

At eight next morning Godefroid knocked at the famous doctor's door. He was shown up by the servant to a room on the first floor of the house, which he had had time to examine while the porter found the manservant.

Happily, Godefroid's punctuality had saved him the vexation of waiting, as he had hoped it might. He was evidently the first-comer. He was led through a very plain anteroom into a large study, where he found an old man in a dressing-gown, smoking a long pipe. The dressing-gown, of black moreen, was shiny with wear, and dated from the time of the Polish dispersion.

"What can I do to serve you?" said the Jew, "for you are not ill."

And he fixed Godefroid with a look that had all the sharp inquisitiveness of the Polish Jew, eyes which seem to have ears.

To Godefroid's great surprise, Halpersohn was a man of fifty-six, with short bow-legs and a broad, powerful frame. There was an Oriental stamp about the man, and his face must in youth have been singularly handsome; the remains showed a marked Jewish nose, as long and as curved as a Damascus cimeter. His forehead was truly Polish, broad and lofty, wrinkled all over like crumpled paper, and recalling that of a Saint-Joseph by some old Italian master. His eyes were sea-green, set like a parrot's in puckered gray lids, and expressive of cunning and avarice in the highest degree. His mouth, thin and straight, like a cut in his face, lent this sinister countenance a crowning touch of suspiciousness.

The pale, lean features—for Halpersohn was extraordinarily thin—were crowned by ill-kept gray hair, and graced by a very thick, long beard, black streaked with white, that

hid half his face, so that only the forehead and eyes, the cheekbones, nose, and lips were visible.

This man, a friend of the agitator Lelewel, wore a black velvet cap that came down in a point on his forehead and showed off its mellow hue, worthy of Rembrandt's brush.

The doctor, who subsequently became equally famous for his talents and his avarice, startled Godefroid by his question, and the young man asked himself, "Can he take me for a thief?"

The reply to the question was evident on the doctor's table and chimney-piece. Godefroid had fancied himself the first-comer—he was the last. His patients had laid very handsome sums on the table and shelf, for Godefroid saw piles of twenty and forty franc pieces and two thousand-franc notes. Was all this the fruit of a single morning? He greatly doubted it, and he suspected an ingenious trick. The infallible but money-loving doctor perhaps tried thus to encourage his patients' liberality, and to make his rich clients believe that he was given banknotes as if they were curl-papers.

Moïse Halpersohn was no doubt largely paid, for he cured his patients, and cured them of those very complaints which the profession gave up in despair. It is very little known in Western Europe that the Slav nations possess a store of medical secrets. They have a number of sovereign remedies derived from their intercourse with the Chinese, the Persians, the Cossacks, the Turks, and the Tartars. Some peasant women, regarded as witches, have been known to cure hydrophobia completely in Poland with the juice of certain plants. There is among those nations a great mass of uncoded information as to the effects of certain plants and the powdered bark of trees, which is handed down from family to family, and miraculous cures are effected there.

Halpersohn, who for five or six years was regarded as a charlatan, with his powders and mixtures, had the innate instinct of a great healer. Not only was he learned, he had



observed with great care, and had travelled all over Germany, Russia, Persia, and Turkey, where he had picked up much traditional lore; and as he was learned in chemistry, he became a living encyclopedia of the secrets preserved by "the good women," as they were called, the midwives and "wise women" of every country whither he had followed his father, a wandering trader.

It must not be supposed that the scene in "Richard in Palestine," in which Saladin cures the King of England, is pure fiction. Halpersohn has a little silk bag, which he soaks in water till it is faintly colored, and certain fevers yield to this infusion taken by the patient. The virtues residing in plants are infinitely various, according to him, and the most terrible maladies admit of cure. He, however, like his brother physicians, pauses sometimes before the incomprehensible. Halpersohn admires the invention of homeopathy, less for its medical system than for its therapeutics; he was at that time in correspondence with Hedenius of Dresden, Chelius of Heidelberg, and the other famous Germans, but keeping his own hand dark though it was full of discoveries. He would have no pupils.

The setting of this figure, which might have stepped out of a picture by Rembrandt, was quite in harmony with it. The study, hung with green flock paper, was poorly furnished with a green divan. The carpet, also of moss green, showed the thread. A large armchair covered with black leather, for the patients, stood near the window, which was hung with green curtains. The doctor's seat was a study-chair with arms, in the Roman style, of mahogany with a green leather seat. Besides the chimney-piece and the long table at which he wrote, there was in the middle of the wall opposite the fireplace a common iron chest supporting a clock of Vienna granite, on which stood a bronze group of Love sporting with Death, the gift of a famous German sculptor whom Halpersohn had, no doubt, cured. A tazza between two candlesticks was all the ornament of the chimney-shelf. Two bracket shelves, one at each end of the

divan, served to place trays on, and Godefroid noted that there were silver bowls on them, water bottles, and table-napkins.

This simplicity, verging on bareness, struck Godefroid, who took everything in at a glance, and he recovered his presence of mind.

"I am perfectly well, Monsieur. I have not come to consult you myself, but on behalf of a lady whom you ought long since to have seen—a lady living on the Boulevard du Mont-Parnasse."

"Oh, yes, that lady has sent her son to me several times. Well, Monsieur, tell her to come to see me?"

"Tell her to come!" cried Godefroid indignantly. "Why, Monsieur, she cannot be lifted from her bed to a sofa; she has to be raised by straps."

"You are not a doctor?" asked the Jew, with a singular grimace which made his face look even more wicked.

"If Baron de Nucingen sent to tell you that he was ill and to ask you to visit him, would you reply, 'Tell him to come to me'?"

"I should go to him," said the Jew dryly, as he spat into a Dutch spittoon made of mahogany and filled with sand.

"You would go to him," Godefroid said mildly, "because the Baron has two millions a year, and—"

"Nothing else has to do with the matter. I should go."

"Very well, Monsieur, you may come and see the lady on the Boulevard du Mont-Parnasse for the same reason. Though I have not such a fortune as the Baron de Nucingen, I am here to tell you that you can name your own price for the cure, or, if you fail, for your care of her. I am prepared to pay you in advance. But how is it, Monsieur, that you, a Polish exile, a communist, I believe, will make no sacrifice for the sake of Poland! For this lady is the granddaughter of General Tarlovski, Prince Poniatowski's friend—"

"Monsieur, you came to ask me to prescribe for this lady, and not to give me your advice. In Poland I am a Pole; in Paris a Parisian. Every one does good in his own way, and you may believe me when I tell you that the greed attributed to me has its good reasons. The money I accumulate has its uses; it is sacred. I sell health; rich persons can pay for it, and I make them buy it. The poor have their physicians.—If I had no aim in view, I should not practice medicine.—I live soberly, and I spend my time in rushing from one to another; I am by nature lazy, and I used to be a gambler! You may draw your own conclusions, young man!—You are not old enough to judge the aged!"

Godefroid kept silence.

"You live with the granddaughter of the foolhardy soldier who had no courage but for fighting, and who betrayed his country to Catherine II.?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Then be at home on Monday at three o'clock," said he, laying down his pipe and taking up his notebook, in which he wrote a few words. "When I call, you will please to pay me two hundred francs; then, if I undertake to cure her, you will give me a thousand crowns.—I have been told," he went on, "that the lady is shrunken as if she had fallen in the fire."

"It is a case, Monsieur, if you will believe the first physicians of Paris, of nervous disease, with symptoms so strange that no one can imagine them who has not seen them."

"Ah, yes, now I remember the details given me by that little fellow.—Till to-morrow, Monsieur."

Godefroid left with a bow to this singular and extraordinary man. There was nothing about him to show or suggest a medical man, not even in that bare consulting-room, where the only article of furniture that was at all remarkable was the ponderous chest, made by Huret or Fichet.

Godefroid reached the Passage Vivienne in time to purchase a splendid harmonium before the shop was shut, and



he despatched it forthwith to Monsieur Bernard, whose address he gave.

Then he went to the Rue Chanoinesse, passing along the Quai des Augustins, where he hoped still to find a book-seller's shop open; he was, in fact, so fortunate, and had a long conversation on the cost of law-books, with the clerk in charge.

He found Madame de la Chanterie and her friends just come in from high mass, and he answered her first inquiring glance with a significant shake.

"And our dear Father Alain is not with you?" said he.

"He will not be here this Sunday," replied Madame de la Chanterie. "You will not find him here till this day week, unless you go to the place where you know you can meet him."

"Madame," said Godefroid, in an undertone, "you know I am less afraid of him than of these gentlemen, and I intended to confess to him."

"And I?"

"Oh, you—I will tell you everything, for I have many things to say to you. As a beginning, I have come upon the most extraordinary case of destitution, the strangest union of poverty and luxury, and figures of a sublimity which outdoes the inventions of our most admired romancers."

"Nature, and especially moral nature, is always as far above art as God is above His creatures. But come," said Madame de la Chanterie, "and tell me all about your expedition into the unknown lands where you made your first venture."

Monsieur Nicolas and Monsieur Joseph—for the Abbé de Vèze had remained for a few minutes at Notre-Dame—left Madame de la Chanterie alone with Godefroid; and he, fresh from the emotions he had gone through the day before, related every detail with the intensity, the gesticulation, and the eagerness that come of the first impression produced by such a scene and its accessories of men and things. He had

a success too; for Madame de la Chanterie, calm and gentle as she was, and accustomed to look into gulfs of suffering, shed tears.

"You did right," said she, "to send the harmonium."

"I wish I could have done much more," replied Godefroid, "since this is the first family through whom I have known the pleasures of charity; I want to secure to this noble old man the chief part of the profits on his great work. I do not know whether you have enough confidence in me to enable me to undertake such a business. From the information I have gained, it would cost about nine thousand francs to bring out an edition of fifteen hundred copies, and their lowest selling value would be twenty-four thousand francs. As we must, in the first instance, pay off the three thousand and odd francs that have been advanced on the manuscript, we should have to risk twelve thousand francs.

"Oh, Madame! if you could but imagine how bitterly, as I made my way hither from the Quai des Augustins, I rued having so foolishly wasted my little fortune. The Genius of Charity appeared to me, as it were, and filled me with the ardor of a neophyte; I desire to renounce the world, to live the life of these gentlemen, and to be worthy of you. Many a time during the past two days have I blessed the chance that brought me to your house. I will obey you in every particular till you judge me worthy to join the brotherhood."

"Well," said Madame de la Chanterie very seriously, after a few minutes of reflection, "listen to me, I have important things to say to you. You have been fascinated, my dear boy, by the poetry of misfortune. Yes, misfortune often has a poetry of its own; for, to me, poetry is a certain exaltation of feeling, and suffering is feeling. We live so much through suffering!"

"Yes, Madame, I was captured by the demon of curiosity. How could I help it! I have not yet acquired the habit of seeing into the heart of these unfortunate lives, and

I cannot set out with the calm resolution of your three pious soldiers of the Lord. But I may tell you, it was not till I had quelled this incitement that I devoted myself to your work."

"Listen, my very dear son," said Madame de la Chanterie, saying the words with a saintly sweetness which deeply touched Godefroid, "we have forbidden ourselves absolutely—and this is no exaggeration, for we do not allow ourselves even to think of what is forbidden—we have forbidden ourselves ever to embark in a speculation. To print a book for sale, and looking for a return, is business, and any transaction of that kind would involve us in the difficulties of trade. To be sure, it looks in this case very feasible, and even necessary. Do you suppose that it is the first instance of the kind that has come before us? Twenty times, a hundred times, we have seen how a family, a concern, could be saved. But, then, what should we have become in undertaking matters of this kind? We should be simply a trading firm. To be a sleeping partner with the unfortunate is not work; it is only helping misfortune to work. In a few days you may meet with even harder cases than this; will you do the same thing? You would be overwhelmed.

"Remember, for one thing, that the house of Mongenod, for a year past, has ceased to keep our accounts. Quite half of your time will be taken up by keeping our books. There are, at this time, nearly two thousand persons in our debt in Paris; and of those who may repay us, at any rate, it is necessary that we should check the amounts they owe us. We never sue—we wait. We calculate that half of the money given out is lost. The other half sometimes returns doubled.

"Now, suppose this lawyer were to die, the twelve thousand francs would be badly invested! But if his daughter recovers, if his grandson does well, if he one day gets another appointment—then, if he has any sense of honor, he will remember the debt, and return the funds of the poor with interest. Do you know that more than one family,



raised from poverty and started by us on the road to fortune by considerable loans without interest, has saved for the poor and returned us sums of double and sometimes treble the amount?

"This is our only form of speculation.

"In the first place, as to this case which interests you, and ought to interest you, consider that the sale of the lawyer's book depends on its merits; have you read it? Then, even if the work is excellent, how many excellent books have remained two or three years without achieving the success they deserved. How many a wreath is laid on a tomb! And, as I know, publishers have ways of driving bargains and taking their charges which make the business one of the most risky and the most difficult to disentangle of all in Paris. Monsieur Nicolas can tell you about these difficulties, inherent in the nature of book-making. So, you see, we are prudent; we have ample experience of every kind of misery, as of every branch of trade, for we have long been studying Paris. The Mongenods give us much help; they are a light to our path, and through them we know that the Bank of France is always suspicious of the book-trade, though it is a noble trade—but it is badly conducted.

"As to the four thousand francs needed to save this noble family from the horrors of indigence, I will give you the money; for the poor boy and his grandfather must be fed and decently dressed.—There are sorrows, miseries, wounds, which we bind up at once without inquiring who it is that we are helping; religion, honor, character, are not inquired into; but as soon as it is a case of lending the money belonging to the poor to assist the unfortunate under the more active form of industry or trade, then we require some guarantee, and are as rigid as the money-lenders. So, for all beyond this immediate relief, be satisfied with finding the most honest publisher for the old man's book. This is a matter for Monsieur Nicolas. He is acquainted with lawyers and professors and authors of works in jurisprudence;

next Saturday he will, no doubt, be prepared with some good advice for you.

"Be easy; the difficulty will be got over if possible. At the same time, it might be well if Monsieur Nicolas could read the magistrate's book; if you can persuade him to lend it."

Godefroid was amazed at this woman's sound sense, for he had believed her to be animated solely by the spirit of charity. He knelt on one knee and kissed one of her beautiful hands, saying—

"Then you are Reason too!"

"In our work we have to be everything," said she, with the peculiar cheerfulness of a true saint.

There was a brief silence, broken by Godefroid, who exclaimed—

"Two thousand debtors, did you say, Madame? Two thousand accounts! It is tremendous!"

"Two thousand accounts, which may lead, as I have told you, to our being repaid from the delicate honor of the borrowers. But there are three thousand more—families who will never make us any return but in thanks. Thus, as I have told you, we feel that it is necessary to keep books; and if your secrecy is above suspicion, you will be our financial oracle. We ought to keep a day-book, a ledger, a book of current expenses, and a cash-book. Of course, we have receipts, notes of hand, but it takes a great deal of time to look for them— Here come the gentlemen."

Godefroid, at first serious and thoughtful, took little part in the conversation; he was bewildered by the revelation Madame de la Chanterie had just imparted to him in a way which showed that she meant it to be the reward of his zeal.

"Two thousand families indebted to us!" said he to himself. "Why, if they all cost as much as Monsieur Bernard will cost us, we must have millions sown broadcast in Paris!"

This reflection was one of the last promptings of the worldly spirit which was fast dying out in Godefroid. As

he thought the matter over, he understood that the united fortunes of Madame de la Chanterie, of Messieurs Alain, Nicolas, Joseph, and Judge Popinot, with the gifts collected by the Abbé de Vèze, and the loans from the Mongenods, must have produced a considerable capital; also, that in twelve or fifteen years this capital, with the interest paid on it by those who had shown their gratitude, must have increased like a snowball, since the charitable holders took nothing from it. By degrees he began to see clearly how the immense affair was managed, and his wish to co-operate was increased.

At nine o'clock he was about to return on foot to the Boulevard du Mont-Parnasse; but Madame de la Chanterie, distrustful of so lonely a neighborhood, insisted on his taking a cab. As he got out of the vehicle, though the shutters were so closely fastened that not a gleam of light was visible, Godefroid heard the sounds of the instrument; and Auguste, who, no doubt, was watching for Godefroid's return, half opened the door on the landing, and said—

"Mamma would very much like to see you, and my grandfather begs you will take a cup of tea."

Godefroid went in and found the invalid transfigured by the pleasure of the music; her face beamed and her eyes sparkled like diamonds.

"I ought to have waited for you, to let you hear the first chords; but I flew at this little organ as a hungry man rushes on a banquet. But you have a soul to understand me, and I know I am forgiven."

Vanda made a sign to her son, who placed himself where he could press the pedal that supplied the interior of the instrument with wind; and, with her eyes raised to heaven like Saint Cecilia, the invalid, whose hands had for a time recovered their strength and agility, performed some variations on the prayer in "Mosè" which her son had bought for her. She had composed them in a few hours. Godefroid discerned in her a talent identical with that of Chopin. It



was a soul manifesting itself by divine sounds in which sweet melancholy predominated.

Monsieur Bernard greeted Godefroid with a look expressing a sentiment long since in abeyance. If the tears had not been forever dried up in the old man, scorched by so many fierce sorrows, his eyes would at this moment have been wet.

The old lawyer was fingering his snuff-box and gazing at his daughter with unutterable rapture.

"To-morrow, Madame," said Godefroid, when the music had ceased, "your fate will be sealed, for I have good news for you. The famous Halpersohn will come at three o'clock.—And he has promised," he added in Monsieur Bernard's ear, "to tell me the truth."

The old man rose, and taking Godefroid by the hand, led him into a corner of the room near the fireplace. He was trembling.

"What a night lies before me! It is the final sentence!" said he in a whisper. "My daughter will be cured or condemned!"

"Take courage," said Godefroid, "and after tea come to my rooms."

"Cease playing, my child," said Monsieur Bernard; "you will bring on an attack. Such an expenditure of strength will be followed by a reaction."

He made Auguste remove the instrument, and brought his daughter her cup of tea with the coaxing ways of a nurse who wants to anticipate the impatience of a baby.

"And what is this doctor like?" asked she, already diverted by the prospect of seeing a stranger.

Vanda, like all prisoners, was consumed by curiosity. When the physical symptoms of her complaint gave her some respite, they seemed to develop in her mind, and then she had the strangest whims and violent caprices. She wanted to see Rossini, and cried because her father, who could, she imagined, do everything, assured her he could not bring him.

Godefroid gave her a minute description of the Jewish physician and his consulting-room, for she knew nothing of the steps taken by her father. Monsieur Bernard had enjoined silence on his grandson as to his visits to Halpersohn; he had so much feared to excite hopes which might not be realized. Vanda seemed to hang on the words that fell from Godefroid's lips; she was spellbound and almost crazy, so ardent did her desire become to see the strange Pole.

"Poland has produced many singular and mysterious figures," said the old lawyer. "Just now, for instance, besides this doctor there is Hoëné Vronski the mathematician and seer, Mickievicz the poet, the inspired Tovianski, and Chopin with his superhuman talent. Great national agitations always produce these crippled giants."

"Oh, my dear papa, what a man you are! If you were to write down all that we hear you say simply to entertain me, you would make a fortune! For, would you believe me, Monsieur, my kind old father invents tales for me when I have no more novels to read, and so sends me to sleep. His voice lulls me, and he often soothes my pain with his cleverness. Who will ever repay him?—Auguste, my dear boy, you ought to kiss your grandfather's footprints for me."

The youth looked at his mother with his fine eyes full of tears; and that look, overflowing with long repressed compassion, was a poem in itself. Godefroid rose, took Auguste's hand, and pressed it warmly.

"God has given you two angels for your companions, Madame!" he exclaimed.

"Indeed I know it. And I blame myself for so often provoking them. Come, dear Auguste, and kiss your mother. He is a son, Monsieur, of whom any mother would be proud. He is as good as gold, candid—a soul without sin; but a rather too impassioned creature, like his mamma. God has nailed me to my bed to preserve me perhaps from the follies women commit—when they have too much heart!" she ended with a smile.

Godefroid smiled in reply and bowed good-night.

"Good-night, Monsieur; and be sure to thank your friend, for he has made a poor cripple very happy."

"Monsieur," said Godefroid when he was in his rooms, alone with Monsieur Bernard, who had followed him, "I think I may promise you that you shall not be robbed by those three sharpers. I can get the required sum, but you must place the papers proving the loan in my hands. If I am to do anything more, you should allow me to have your book—not to read myself, for I am not learned enough to judge of it, but to be read by an old lawyer I know, a man of unimpeachable integrity, who will undertake, according to the character of the work, to find a respectable firm with whom you may deal on equitable terms.—On this, however, I do not insist.

"Meanwhile, here are five hundred francs," he went on, offering a note to the astonished lawyer, "to supply your more pressing wants. I ask for no receipt; you will be indebted on no evidence but that of your conscience, and your conscience may lie silent till you have to some extent recovered yourself.—I will settle with Halpersohn."

"But who are you?" asked the old man, sinking on to a chair.

"I," replied Godefroid, "am nobody; but I serve certain powerful persons to whom your necessities are now made known, and who take an interest in you.—Ask no more."

"And what motive can these persons have—?"

"Religion, Monsieur," replied Godefroid.

"Is it possible?—Religion!"

"Yes, the Catholic, Apostolic, Roman religion."

"Then you are of the Order of Jesus?"

"No, Monsieur," said Godefroid. "Be perfectly easy. No one has any design on you beyond that of helping you and restoring your family to comfort."

"Can philanthropy then wear any guise but that of vanity?"

"Nay, Monsieur, do not insult holy Catholic Charity, the virtue described by Saint Paul!" cried Godefroid eagerly.



At this reply Monsieur Bernard began to stride up and down the room.

"I accept!" he suddenly said. "And I have but one way of showing my gratitude—that is, by intrusting you with my work. The notes and quotations are unnecessary to a lawyer; and I have, as I told you, two months' work before me yet in copying them out.—To-morrow then," and he shook hands with Godefroid.

"Can I have effected a conversion?" thought Godefroid, struck by the new expression he saw on the old man's face as he had last spoken.

Next day, at three o'clock, a hackney coach stopped at the door, and out of it stepped Halpersohn, buried in a vast bearskin coat. The cold had increased in the course of the night, and the thermometer stood at ten degrees below freezing.

The Jewish doctor narrowly though furtively examined the room in which his visitor of yesterday received him, and Godefroid detected a gleam of suspicion sparkling in his eye like the point of a dagger. This swift flash of doubt gave Godefroid an internal chill; he began to think that this man would be merciless in his money dealings; and it is so natural to think of genius as allied to goodness, that this gave him an impulse of disgust.

"Monsieur," said he, "I perceive that the plainness of my lodgings arouses your uneasiness; so you will not be surprised at my manner of proceeding. Here are your two hundred francs, and here, you see, are three notes for a thousand francs each"—and he drew out the notes which Madame de la Chanterie had given him to redeem Monsieur Bernard's manuscript. "If you have any further doubts as to my solvency, I may refer you, as a guarantee for the carrying out of my pledge, to Messrs. Mongenod the bankers, Rue de la Victoire."

"I know them," said Halpersohn, slipping the ten gold pieces into his pocket.

"And he will go there!" thought Godefroid.

"And where does the sick lady live?" asked the doctor, rising, as a man who knows the value of time.

"Come this way, Monsieur," said Godefroid, going first to show him the way.

The Jew cast a shrewd and scrutinizing glance on the rooms he went through, for he had the eye of a spy; and he was able to see the misery of poverty through the door into Monsieur Bernard's bedroom, for, unluckily, Monsieur Bernard had just been putting on the dress in which he always showed himself to his daughter, and in his haste to admit his visitors he left the door of his kennel ajar.

He bowed with dignity to Halpersohn, and softly opened his daughter's bedroom door.

"Vanda, my dear, here is the doctor," he said.

He stood aside to let Halpersohn pass, still wrapped in his furs.

The Jew was surprised at the splendor of this room, which in this part of the town seemed anomalous; but his astonishment was of no long duration, for he had often seen in the houses of German and Polish Jews a similar discrepancy between the display of extreme penury and concealed wealth. While walking from the door to the bed he never took his eyes off the sufferer; and when he stood by her side, he said to her in Polish—

"Are you a Pole?"

"I am not; my mother was."

"Whom did your grandfather, General Tarlovski, marry?"

"A Pole."

"Of what province?"

"A Sobolevska of Pinsk."

"Good.—And this gentleman is your father?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Monsieur," said Halpersohn, "is your wife—"

"She is dead," replied Monsieur Bernard.

"Was she excessively fair?" said Halpersohn, with some impatience at the interruption.

"Here is a portrait of her," replied Monsieur Bernard, taking down a handsome frame containing several good miniatures.

Halpersohn was feeling the invalid's head and hair, while he looked at the portrait of Vanda Tarlovska *nee* Comtesse Sobolevska.

"Tell me the symptoms of the patient's illness." And he seated himself in the armchair, gazing steadily at Vanda during twenty minutes, while the father and daughter spoke by turns.

"And how old is the lady?"

"Eight-and-thirty."

"Very good!" he said as he rose. "Well, I undertake to cure her. I cannot promise to give her the use of her legs, but she can be cured. Only, she must be placed in a private hospital in my part of the town."

"But, Monsieur, my daughter cannot be moved—"

"I will answer for her life," said Halpersohn sententially. "But I answer for her only on those conditions.—Do you know she will exchange her present symptoms for another horrible form of disease, which will last for a year perhaps, or six months at the very least?—You can come to see her, as you are her father."

"And it is certain?" asked Monsieur Bernard.

"Certain," repeated the Jew. "Your daughter has a vicious humor, a national disorder, in her blood, and it must be brought out. When you bring her, carry her to the Rue Basse-Saint-Pierre at Chaillot—Dr. Halpersohn's private hospital."

"But how?"

"On a stretcher, as the sick people are always carried to a hospital."

"But it will kill her to be moved."

"No."

And Halpersohn, as he spoke this curt *No*, was at the door, where Godefroid met him on the landing.

The Jew, who was suffocating with heat, said in his ear—



"The charge will be fifteen francs a day, besides the thousand crowns; three months paid in advance."

"Very good, Monsieur.—And," asked Godefroid, standing on the step of the cab into which the doctor had hurried, "you answer for the cure?"

"Positively," said the Pole. "Are you in love with the lady?"

"No," said Godefroid.

"You must not repeat what I am about to tell you, for I am saying it only to prove to you that I am sure of the cure; but if you say anything about it, you will be the death of the woman—"

Godefroid replied only by a gesture.

"For seventeen years she has been suffering from the disease known as *Plica Polonica*, which can produce all these torments; I have seen the most dreadful cases. Now I am the only man living who knows how to bring out the *Plica* in such a form as to be curable, for not every one gets over it. You see, Monsieur, that I am really very liberal. If this were some great lady—a Baronne de Nucingen or any other wife or daughter of some modern Cræsus—I should get a hundred—two hundred thousand francs for this cure—whatever I might like to ask!—However, that is a minor misfortune."

"And moving her?"

"Oh, she will seem to be dying, but she will not die of it! She may live a hundred years when once she is cured.—Now, Jacques, quick—Rue Monsieur, and make haste!" said he to the driver.

He left Godefroid standing in the street, where he gazed in bewilderment after the retreating cab.

"Who on earth is that queer-looking man dressed in bearskin?" asked Madame Vauthier, whom nothing could escape. "Is it true, as the hackney coachman said, that he is the most famous doctor in Paris?"

"And what can that matter to you, Mother Vauthier?"

"Oh, not at all," said she with a sour face.

"You made a great mistake in not siding with me," said Godefroid, as he slowly went into the house. "You would have done better than by sticking to Monsieur Barbet and Monsieur Métivier; you will get nothing out of them."

"And am I on their side?" retorted she with a shrug. "Monsieur Barbet is my landlord, that is all."

It took two days to persuade Monsieur Bernard to part from his daughter and carry her to Chaillot. Godefroid and the old lawyer walked all the way, one on each side of the stretcher, screened in with striped blue-and-white ticking, on which the precious patient lay, almost tied down to the mattress, so greatly did her father fear the convulsions of a nervous attack. However, having set out at three o'clock, the procession reached the private hospital at five, when it was dusk. Godefroid paid the four hundred and fifty francs demanded for the three months' board, and took a receipt for it; then, when he went down to pay the two porters, Monsieur Bernard joined him and took from under the mattress a very voluminous sealed packet, which he handed to Godefroid.

"One of these men will fetch you a cab," said he, "for you cannot carry those four volumes very far. This is my book; place it in my censor's hands; I will leave it with him for a week. I shall remain at least a week in this neighborhood, for I cannot abandon my daughter to her fate. I know my grandson; he can mind the house, especially with you to help him; and I commend him to your care. If I were myself what once I was, I would ask you my critic's name; for if he was once a magistrate, there were few whom I did not know—"

"It is no mystery," said Godefroid, interrupting Monsieur Bernard. "Since you show such entire confidence in me, I may tell you that the reader is the President Lecamus de Tresnes."

"Oh, of the Supreme Court in Paris. Take it—by all means. He is one of the noblest men of our time. He and the late Judge Popinot, the judge of the Lower Court, were

lawyers worthy of the best days of the old Parlements. All my fears, if I had any, must vanish.—And where does he live? I should like to go and thank him when he has taken so much trouble.”

“You will find him in the Rue Chanoinesse, under the name of Monsieur Nicolas. I am just going there.—But your agreement with those rascals?”

“Auguste will give it you,” said the old man, going back into the hospital.

A cab was found on the Quai de Billy and brought by one of the men; Godefroid got in and stimulated the driver by the promise of drink money if he drove quickly to the Rue Chanoinesse, where he intended to dine.

Half an hour after Vanda’s removal, three men, dressed in black, were led in by Madame Vauthier at the door in the Rue Notre-Dame des Champs, where they had been waiting, no doubt, till the coast should be clear. They went upstairs under the guidance of the Judas in petticoats, and gently knocked at Monsieur Bernard’s door. As it happened to be a Thursday, the young collegian was at home. He opened the door, and three men slipped like shadows into the outer room.

“What do you want, gentlemen?” asked the youth.

“This is Monsieur Bernard’s—that is to say, Monsieur le Baron—?”

“But what do you want here?”

“Oh, you know that pretty well, young man, for your grandfather has just gone off with a closed litter, I am told.—Well, that does not surprise us; he shows his wisdom. I am a bailiff, and I have come to seize everything here. On Monday last you were summoned to pay three thousand francs and the expenses to Monsieur Métivier, under penalty of imprisonment; and as a man who has grown onions knows the smell of chives, the debtor has taken the key of the fields rather than wait for that of the lock-up. However, if we cannot secure him, we can get a wing or a leg



of his gorgeous furniture—for we know all about it, young man, and we are going to make an official report.”

“Here are some stamped papers that your grandpapa would never take,” said the Widow Vauthier, shoving three writs into Auguste’s hand.

“Stay here, Ma’am; we will put you in possession. The law gives you forty sous a day; it is not to be sneezed at.”

“Ah, ha! Then I shall see what there is in the grand bedroom!” cried Madame Vauthier.

“You shall not go into my mother’s room!” cried the lad in a fury, as he flung himself between the door and the three men in black.

On a sign from their leader, the two men and a lawyer’s clerk who came in seized Auguste.

“No resistance, young man; you are not master here. We shall draw up a charge, and you will spend the night in the lock-up.”

At this dreadful threat, Auguste melted into tears.

“Oh, what a mercy,” cried he, “that mamma is gone! This would have killed her!”

The men and the bailiff now held a sort of council with the Widow Vauthier. Auguste understood, though they talked in a low voice, that what they chiefly wanted was to seize his grandfather’s manuscripts, so he opened the bedroom door.

“Walk in then, gentlemen,” said he, “but spoil nothing. You will be paid to-morrow morning.” Then, still in tears, he went into his own squalid room, snatched up all his grandfather’s notes, and stuffed them into the stove, where he knew that there was not a spark of fire.

The thing was done so promptly that the bailiff, though he was keen and cunning, and worthy of his employers Barbet and Métivier, found the boy in tears on a chair when he rushed into the room, having concluded that the manuscripts would not be in the anteroom. Though books and manuscripts may not legally be seized for debt, the lien signed by the old lawyer in this case justified the proceeding. Still,

it would have been easy to find means of delaying the dis-traint, as Monsieur Bernard would certainly have known. Hence the necessity for acting with cunning.

The Widow Vauthier had been an invaluable ally to her landlord by failing to serve his notices on her lodger; her plan was to throw them on him when entering at the heels of the officers of justice; or, if necessary, to declare to Monsieur Bernard that she had supposed them to be intended for the two writers who had been absent for two days.

The inventory of the goods took above an hour to make out, for the bailiff would omit nothing, and regarded the value as sufficient to pay off the debts.

As soon as the officers were gone, the poor youth took the writs and hurried away to find his grandfather at Halpersohn's hospital; for, as the bailiff assured him that Madame Vauthier was responsible for everything under heavy penalties, he could leave the place without fear.

The idea of his grandfather's being taken to prison for debt drove the poor boy absolutely mad—mad in the way in which the young are mad; that is to say, a victim to the dangerous and fatal excitement in which every energy of youth is in a ferment and may lead to the worst as to the most heroic actions.

When poor Auguste reached the Rue Basse-Saint-Pierre, the doorkeeper told him that he did not know what had become of the father of the patient brought in at five o'clock, but that by Monsieur Halpersohn's orders no one—not even her father—was to be allowed to see the lady for a week, or it might endanger her life.

This reply put a climax to Auguste's desperation. He went back again to the Boulevard du Mont-Parnasse, revolving the most extravagant schemes as he went. He got home by about half-past eight, almost starving, so exhausted by hunger and grief that he accepted when Madame Vauthier invited him to share her supper, consisting of a stew of mutton and potatoes. The poor boy dropped half dead into a chair in the dreadful woman's room.

Encouraged by the old woman's coaxing and insinuating words, he answered a few cunningly arranged questions about Godefroid, and gave her to understand that it was he who would pay off his grandfather's debts on the morrow, and that to him they owed the improvement that had taken place in their prospects during the past week. The widow listened to all this with an affectation of doubt, plying Auguste with a few glasses of wine.

At ten o'clock the wheels of a cab were heard to stop in front of the house, and the woman exclaimed—

"Oh, there is Monsieur Godefroid!"

Auguste took the key of his rooms and went upstairs to see the kind friend of the family; but he found Godefroid so entirely unlike himself that he hesitated to speak till the thought of his grandfather's danger spurred the generous youth.

This is what had happened in the Rue Chanoinesse, and had caused Godefroid's stern expression of countenance.

The neophyte, arriving in good time, had found Madame de la Chanterie and her adherents in the drawing-room, and he had taken Monsieur Nicolas aside to deliver to him the "Spirit of the Modern Laws." Monsieur Nicolas at once carried the sealed parcel to his room, and came down to dinner. Then, after chatting during the first part of the evening, he went up again, intending to begin reading the work.

Godefroid was greatly surprised when, a few minutes after, Manon came from the old judge to beg him to go up to speak with him. Following Manon, he was led to Monsieur Nicolas's room; but he could pay no attention to its details, so greatly was he startled by the evident distress of a man usually so placid and firm.

"Did you know," said Monsieur Nicolas, quite the Judge again, "the name of the author of this work?"

"Monsieur Bernard," said Godefroid. "I know him only by that name. I did not open the parcel—"



"True," said Monsieur Nicolas. "I broke the seals myself.—And you made no inquiry as to his previous history?"

"No. I know that he married for love the daughter of General Tarlovski, that his daughter is named Vanda after her mother, and his grandson Auguste. And the portrait I saw of Monsieur Bernard is, I believe, in the dress of a Presiding Judge—a red gown."

"Look here!" said Monsieur Nicolas, and held out the title of the work in Auguste's handwriting, and in the following form:

## THE SPIRIT OF THE MODERN LAWS

BY

M. BERNARD-JEAN-BAPTISTE MACLOUD

BARON BOURLAC

Formerly Attorney-General to the High Court of Justice at Rouen  
Commander of the Legion of Honor

"Oh! The man who condemned Madame, her daughter, and the Chevalier du Vissard!" said Godefroid in a choked voice.

His knees gave way, and the neophyte dropped on to a chair. "What a beginning!" he murmured.

"This, my dear Godefroid, is a business that comes home to us all. You have done your part; we must deal with it now! I beg you to do nothing further of any kind; go and fetch whatever you left in your rooms; and not a word!—In fact, absolute silence. Tell Baron Bourlac to apply to me. Between this and then, we shall have decided how it will be best to act in such circumstances."

Godefroid went downstairs, called a hackney cab, and hurried back to the Boulevard du Mont-Parnasse, filled with horror as he thought of the examination and trials at Caen, of the hideous drama that ended on the scaffold, and of Ma-

dame de la Chanterie's sojourn in Bicêtre. He understood the neglect into which this lawyer, almost a second Fouquier-Tinville, had fallen in his old age, and the reasons why he so carefully concealed his name.

"I hope Monsieur Nicolas will take some terrible revenge for poor Madame de la Chanterie!"

He had just thought out this not very Christian wish, when he saw Auguste.

"What do you want of me?" asked Godefroid.

"My dear sir, a misfortune has befallen us which is turning my brain! Some scoundrels have been here to take possession of everything belonging to my mother, and they are hunting for my grandfather to put him into prison. But it is not by reason of these disasters that I turn to you for help," said the lad with Roman pride; "it is to beg you to do me such a service as you would do to a condemned criminal—"

"Speak," said Godefroid.

"They wanted to get hold of my grandfather's manuscripts; and as I believe he placed the work in your hands, I want to beg you to take the notes, for the woman will not allow me to remove a thing.—Put them with the volumes, and then—"

"Very well," said Godefroid, "make haste and fetch them."

While the lad went off, to return immediately, Godefroid reflected that the poor boy was guilty of no crime, that he must not break his heart by telling him about his grandfather, or the desertion which was the punishment in his sad old age of the passions of his political career; he took the packet not unkindly.

"What is your mother's name?" he asked.

"My mother, Monsieur, is the Baronne de Mergi. My father was the son of the Presiding Judge of the Supreme Court at Rouen."

"Ah!" said Godefroid, "so your grandfather married his daughter to the son of the famous Judge Mergi?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Leave me, my little friend," said Godefroid.

He went out on to the landing with the young Baron de Mergi, and called Madame Vauthier.

"Mother Vauthier," said he, "you can relet my rooms; I am never coming back again."

And he went down to the cab.

"Have you intrusted anything to that gentleman?" asked the widow of Auguste.

"Yes," said the lad.

"You're a pretty fool. He is one of your enemies' agents. He has been at the bottom of it all, you may be sure. It is proof enough that the trick has turned out all right that he never means to come back. He told me I could let his rooms."

Auguste flew out, and down the boulevard, running after the cab, and at last succeeded in stopping it by his shouts and cries.

"What is it?" asked Godefroid.

"My grandfather's manuscripts?"

"Tell him to apply for them to Monsieur Nicolas."

The lad took this reply as the cruel jest of a thief who has no shame left; he sat down in the snow as he saw the cab set off again at a brisk trot.

He rose in a fever of fierce energy and went home to bed, worn out with rushing about Paris, and quite heart-broken.

Next morning, Auguste de Mergi awoke to find himself alone in the rooms where yesterday his mother and his grandfather had been with him, and he went through all the miseries of his position, of which he fully understood the extent. The utter desertion of the place, hitherto so amply filled, where every minute had brought with it a duty and an occupation, was so painful to him that he went down to ask the Widow Vauthier whether his grandfather had come in during the night or early morning; for he himself had slept very late, and he supposed that if the Baron Bourlac had come home the woman would have warned him



against his pursuers. She replied, with a sneer, that he must know full well where to look for his grandfather; for if he had not come in, it was evident that he had taken up his abode in the "Chateau de Clichy." This impudent irony from the woman who, the day before, had cajoled him so effectually, again drove the poor boy to frenzy, and he flew to the private hospital in the Rue Basse-Saint-Pierre, in despair, as he thought of his grandfather in prison.

Baron Bourlac had hung about all night in front of the hospital which he was forbidden to enter, or close to the house of Doctor Halpersohn, whom he naturally wished to call to account for this conduct. The doctor did not get home till two in the morning. The old man, who, at half-past one, had been at the doctor's door, had just gone off to walk in the Champs-Élysées, and when he returned at half-past two the gatekeeper told him that Monsieur Halpersohn was now in bed and asleep, and was on no account to be disturbed.

Here, alone, at half-past two in the morning, the unhappy father, in utter despair, paced the quay, and under the trees loaded with frost, of the sidewalks of the Cours-la-Reine, waiting for the day.

At nine o'clock he presented himself at the doctor's, and asked him why he thus kept his daughter under lock and key.

"Monsieur," said Halpersohn, "I yesterday made myself answerable for your daughter's recovery; and at this moment I am responsible for her life, and you must understand that in such a case I must have sovereign authority. I may tell you that your daughter yesterday took a remedy which will give her the *Plica*, that till the disease is brought out the lady must remain invisible. I will not allow myself to lose my patient or you to lose your daughter by exposing her to any excitement, any error of treatment; if you really insist on seeing her, I shall demand a consultation of three

medical men to protect myself against any responsibility, as the patient might die."

The old man, exhausted with fatigue, had dropped on to a chair; he quickly rose, however, saying—

"Forgive me, Monsieur; I have spent the night in mortal anguish, for you cannot imagine how much I love my daughter, whom I have nursed for fifteen years between life and death, and this week of waiting is torture to me!"

The Baron left Halpersohn's study, tottering like a drunken man, the doctor giving him his arm to the top of the stairs.

About an hour later, he saw Auguste de Mergi walk into his room. On questioning the lodgekeeper of the private hospital, the poor lad had just heard that the father of the lady admitted the day before had called again in the evening, had asked for her, and had spoken of going early in the day to Doctor Halpersohn, who, no doubt, would know something about him. At the moment when Auguste de Mergi appeared in the doctor's room, Halpersohn was breakfasting off a cup of chocolate and a glass of water, all on a small round table; he did not disturb himself for the youth, but went on soaking his strip of bread in the chocolate; for he ate nothing but a roll, cut into four with an accuracy that argued some skill as an operator. Halpersohn had, in fact, practiced surgery in the course of his travels.

"Well, young man," said he as Vanda's son came in, "you too have come to require me to account for your mother?"

"Yes, Monsieur," said Auguste.

The young fellow had come forward as far as the large table, and his eye was immediately caught by several bank-notes lying among the little piles of gold pieces. In the position in which the unhappy boy found himself, the temptation was stronger than his principles, well grounded as they were. He saw before him the means of rescuing his grandfather, and saving the fruits of twenty years' labor imperilled by avaricious speculators. He fell The fasci-

nation was as swift as thought, and justified itself by an idea of self-immolation that smiled on the boy. He said to himself—

"I shall be done for, but I shall save my mother and my grandfather."

Under this stress of antagonism between his reason and the impulse to crime, he acquired, as madmen do, a strange and fleeting dexterity, and instead of asking after his grandfather, he listened and agreed to all the doctor was saying.

Halpersohn, like all acute observers, had understood the whole past history of the father, the daughter, and her son. He had scented or guessed the facts which Madame de Mergi's conversation had confirmed, and he felt in consequence a sort of benevolence toward his new clients; as to respect or admiration, he was incapable of them.

"Well, my dear boy," said he familiarly, "I am keeping your mother to restore her to you young, handsome, and in good health. Hers is one of those rare diseases which doctors find very interesting; and besides, she is, through her mother, a fellow-countrywoman of mine. You and your grandfather must be brave enough to live without seeing her for a fortnight, and Madame—?"

"La Baronne de Mergi."

"If she is a Baroness, you are a Baron—?" asked Halpersohn.

At this moment the theft was effected. While the doctor was looking at his bread, heavy with chocolate, Auguste snatched up four folded notes, and had slipped them into his trousers pocket, affecting to keep his hand there out of sheer embarrassment.

"Yes, Monsieur, I am a Baron. So too is my grandfather; he was public prosecutor at the time of the Restoration."

"You blush, young man. You need not blush because you are a Baron and poor—it is a very common case."

"And who told you, Monsieur, that we are poor?"

"Well, your grandfather told me that he had spent the



night in the Champs-Élysées; and though I know no palace where there is so fine a vault overhead as that which was glittering at two o'clock this morning, it was cold, I can tell you, in the palace where your grandfather was taking his airing. A man does not go to the *Hotel de la Belle-Étoile* by preference."

"Has my grandfather been here?" cried Auguste, seizing the opportunity to beat a retreat. "Thank you, Monsieur. I will come again, with your permission, for news of my mother."

As soon as he got out, the young Baron went off to the bailiff's office, taking a hackney cab to get there the sooner. The man gave up the agreement, and the bill of costs duly receipted, and then desired the young man to take one of the clerks with him to release the person in charge from her functions.

"And as Messrs. Barbet and Métiévier live in your part of the town," added he, "my boy will take them the money and desire them to restore you the deed of lien on the property."

Auguste, who understood nothing of these phrases and formalities, submitted. He received seven hundred francs in silver, the change out of his four thousand-franc notes, and went off in the clerk's company. He got into the cab in a state of indescribable bewilderment, for, the end being achieved, remorse was making itself felt; he saw himself disgraced and cursed by his grandfather, whose austerity was well known to him; and he believed that his mother would die of grief if she heard of his guilt. All nature had changed before his eyes. He was lost; he no longer saw the snow, the houses looked like ghosts.

No sooner was he at home than the young Baron decided on his course of action, and it was certainly that of an honest man. He went into his mother's room and took the diamond snuff-box given to his grandfather by the Emperor, to send it with the seven hundred francs to Doctor Halpersohn with the following letter, which required several rough copies—

"MONSIEUR: The fruits of twenty years' labor—my grandfather's work—were about to be absorbed by some money-lenders, who threatened him with imprisonment. Three thousand three hundred francs were enough to save him; and seeing so much gold on your table, I could not resist the idea of seeing my parent free by thus making good to him the earnings of his long toil. I borrowed from you, without your leave, four thousand francs; but as only three thousand three hundred francs were needed, I send you the remaining seven hundred, and with them a snuff-box set with diamonds, given by the Emperor to my grandfather; this will, I hope, indemnify you.

"If you should not after this believe that I, who shall all my life regard you as my benefactor, am a man of honor, if you will at any rate preserve silence as to an action so unjustifiable in any other circumstances, you will have saved my grandfather as you will save my mother, and I shall be for life your devoted slave.

"AUGUSTE DE MERGI."

At about half-past two, Auguste, who had walked to the Champs-Élysées, sent a messenger on to deliver at Doctor Halpersohn's door a sealed box containing ten louis, a five-hundred-franc note, and the snuff-box; then he slowly went home across the Pont d'Jéna by the Invalides and the Boulevards, trusting to Doctor Halpersohn's generosity.

The physician, who had at once discovered the theft, had meanwhile changed his views as to his clients. He supposed that the old man had come to rob him, and, not having succeeded, had sent this boy. He put no credence in the rank and titles they had assumed, and went off at once to the public prosecutor's office to state his case, and desire that immediate steps should be taken for the prosecution.

The prudence of the law rarely allows of such rapid proceedings as the complaining parties would wish; but, at about three in the afternoon, a police officer, followed by

some detectives, who affected to be lounging on the boulevard, was catechising Madame Vauthier as to her lodgers, and the widow quite unconsciously was confirming the constable's suspicions.

Népomucène, scenting the policeman, thought that it was the old man they wanted; and as he was very fond of Monsieur Auguste, he hurried out to meet Monsieur Bernard, whom he intercepted in the Avenue de l'Observatoire.

"Make your escape, Monsieur," cried he. "They have come to take you. The bailiffs were in yesterday and laid hands on everything. Mother Vauthier, who has hidden some stamped papers of yours, said you would be in Clichy by last night or this morning. There, do you see those sneaks?"

The old judge recognized the men as bailiffs, and he understood everything.

"And Monsieur Godefroid?" he asked.

"Gone, never to come back. Mother Vauthier says he was a spy for your enemies."

Monsieur Bourlac determined that he would go at once to Barbet, and in a quarter of an hour he was there; the old bookseller lived in the Rue Sainte-Catherine-d'Enfer.

"Oh, you have come yourself to fetch your agreement," said the publisher, bowing to his victim. "Here it is," and, to the Baron's great amazement, he handed him the document, which the old lawyer took, saying—

"I do not understand—"

"Then it was not you who paid up?" said Barbet.

"Are you paid?"

"Your grandson carried the money to the bailiff this morning."

"And is it true that you took possession of my goods yesterday?"

"Have you not been home for two days?" said Barbet. "Still, a retired public prosecutor must know what it is to be threatened with imprisonment for debt!"

On this the Baron bowed coldly to Barbet, and returned



home, supposing that the authorities had in fact come in search of the authors living on the first floor. He walked slowly, absorbed in vague apprehensions, for Népomucène's warning seemed to him more and more inexplicable. Could Godefroid have betrayed him? He mechanically turned down the Rue Notre-Dame des Champs, and went in by the back door, which happened to be open, running against Népomucène.

"Oh, Monsieur, make haste, come on; they are taking Monsieur Auguste to prison; they caught him on the boulevard; it was him they were hunting—they have been questioning him—"

The old man, with a spring like a tiger's, rushed through the house and garden and out on to the boulevard, as swift as an arrow, and was just in time to see his grandson get into a hackney coach between three men.

"Auguste," he cried, "what is the meaning of this?"

The youth burst into tears, and turned faint.

"Monsieur," said he to the police officer, whose scarf struck his eye, "I am Baron Bourlac, formerly a public prosecutor; for pity's sake, explain the matter."

"Monsieur, if you are Baron Bourlac, you will understand it in two words. I have just questioned this young man, and he has unfortunately confessed—"

"What?"

"A theft of four thousand francs from Doctor Halpersohn."

"Auguste! Is it possible?"

"Grandpapa, I have sent him your diamond snuff-box as a guarantee. I wanted to save you from the disgrace of imprisonment."

"Wretched boy, what have you done?" cried the Baron. "The diamonds are false; I sold the real stones three years ago."

The police officer and his clerk looked at each other with strange meaning. This glance, full of suggestions, was seen by the Baron, and fell like a thunderbolt.

"Monsieur," said he to the officer, "be quite easy; I will go and see the public prosecutor; you can testify to the delusion in which I have kept my daughter and my grandson. You must do your duty, but, in the name of humanity, send my grandson to a cell by himself.—I will go to prison.—Where are you taking him?"

"Are you Baron Bourlac?" said the constable.

"Oh! Monsieur—"

"Because the public prosecutor, the examining judge, and I myself could not believe that such men as you and your grandson could be guilty; like the doctor, we concluded that some swindlers had borrowed your names."

He took the Baron aside and said—

"Were you at Doctor Halpersohn's house this morning?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"And your grandson, too, about half an hour later?"

"I know nothing about that; I have this instant come in, and I have not seen my grandson since yesterday."

"The writs he showed me and the warrant for arrest explain everything," said the police agent. "I know his motive for the crime. I ought indeed to arrest you, Monsieur, as abetting your grandson, for your replies confirm the facts alleged by the complainant; but the notices served on you, and which I return to you," he added, holding out a packet of stamped papers which he had in his hand, "certainly prove you to be Baron Bourlac. At the same time, you must be prepared to be called up before Monsieur Marest, the examining judge in this case. I believe I am right in relaxing the usual rule in consideration of your past dignity."

"As to your grandson, I will speak of him to the public prosecutor as soon as I go in, and we will show every possible consideration for the grandson of a retired judge, and the victim of a youthful error. Still, there is the indictment, the accused has confessed; I have sent in my report, and have a warrant for his imprisonment; I cannot help

myself. As to the place of detention, your grandson will be taken to the Conciergerie."

"Thank you, Monsieur," said the miserable Bourlac. He fell senseless on the snow, and tumbled into one of the rain-water cisterns, which at that time divided the trees on the boulevard.

The police officer called for help, and Népomucène hurried out with Madame Vauthier. The old man was carried indoors, and the woman begged the police constable, as he went by the Rue de l'Enfer, to send Doctor Berton as quickly as possible.

"What is the matter with my grandfather?" asked poor Auguste.

"He is crazed, sir. That is what comes of thieving!"

Auguste made a rush as though to crack his skull; but the two men held him back.

"Come, come, young man. Take it quietly," said the officer. "Be calm. You have done wrong, but it is not irremediable."

"But pray, Monsieur, tell the woman that my grandfather has probably not touched food for these twenty-four hours."

"Oh, poor creatures!" said the officer to himself.

He stopped the coach, which had started, and said a word in his clerk's ear; the man ran off to speak to old Vauthier, and then returned at once.

Monsieur Berton was of opinion that Monsieur Bernard—for he knew him by no other name—was suffering from an attack of high fever; but when Madame Vauthier had told him of all the events that had led up to it in the way in which a housekeeper tells a story, the doctor thought it necessary to report the whole business next day to Monsieur Alain at the Church of Saint-Jacques du Haut-Pas, and Monsieur Alain sent a pencil note by messenger to Monsieur Nicolas, Rue Chanoinesse.

Godefroid, on reaching home the night before, had given the notes on the book to Monsieur Nicolas, who spent the



greater part of the night in reading the first volume of Baron Bourlac's work.

On the following day Madame de la Chanterie told Godefroid that if his determination still held good he might begin on his work at once.

Godefroid, initiated by her into the financial secrets of the Society, worked for seven or eight hours a day, and for several months, under the supervision of Frédéric Mongenod, who came every Sunday to look through the work, and who praised him for the way in which it was done.

"You are a valuable acquisition for the saints among whom you live," said the banker when all the accounts were clearly set forth and balanced. "Two or three hours a day will now be enough to keep the accounts in order, and during the rest of your time you can help them, if you still feel the vocation as you did six months since."

This was in the month of July, 1838. During the time that had elapsed since the affair of the Boulevard du Mont-Parnasse, Godefroid, eager to prove himself worthy of his companions, had never asked a single question as to Baron Bourlac; for, as he had not heard a word, nor found anything in the account-books that bore on the matter, he suspected that the silence that was preserved with regard to the two men who had been so ruthless to Madame de la Chanterie, was intended as a test to which he was being put, or perhaps as proof that the noble lady's friends had avenged her.

But, two months later, in the course of a walk one day, he went as far as the Boulevard du Mont-Parnasse, managed to meet Madame Vauthier, and asked her for some news of the Bernard family.

"Who can tell, my dear Monsieur Godefroid, what has become of those people? Two days after your expedition—for it was you, you cunning dog, who blabbed to my landlord—somebody came who took that old swaggerer off my hands. Then, in four-and-twenty hours, everything was

cleared out—not a stick left, nor a word said—perfect strangers to me, and they told me nothing. I believe he packed himself off to Algiers with his precious grandson; for Népomucène, who was very devoted to that young thief—he is no better than he should be himself—did not find him in the Conciergerie, and he alone knows where they are, and the scamp has gone off and left me. You bring up these wretched foundlings, and this is the reward you get; they leave you high and dry. I have not been able to find any one to take his place, and as the neighborhood is very crowded, and the house is full, I am worked to death.”

And Godefroid would never have known anything more of Baron Bourlac but for the conclusion of the adventure, which came about through one of the chance meetings which occur in Paris.

In the month of September, Godefroid was walking down the Champs-Élysées, when, as he passed the end of the Rue Marbeuf, he remembered Doctor Halpersohn.

“I ought to call on him,” thought he, “and ask if he cured Bourlac’s daughter. What a voice, what a gift she had! She wanted to dedicate herself to God!”

As he got to the Rond-Point, Godefroid crossed the road hurriedly to avoid the carriages that came quickly down the grand avenue, and he ran up against a youth who had a young-looking woman on his arm.

“Take care!” cried the young man. “Are you blind?”

“Why, it is you!” cried Godefroid, recognizing Auguste de Mergi.

Auguste was so well dressed, so handsome, so smart, so proud of the lady he was escorting, that, but for the memories that rushed on his mind, Godefroid would hardly have recognized them.

“Why, it is dear Monsieur Godefroid!” exclaimed the lady.

On hearing the delightful tones of Vanda’s enchanting voice, and seeing her walking, Godefroid stood riveted to the spot.

"Cured!" he exclaimed.

"Ten days ago he allowed me to walk," she replied.

"Halpersohn?"

"Yes," said she. "And why have you never come to see us?—But, indeed, you were wise. My hair was not cut off till about a week ago. This that you see is but a wig; but the doctor assures me it will grow again!—But we have so much to say to each other. Will you not come to dine with us?—Oh, that harmonium!—Oh, Monsieur!" and she put her handkerchief to her eyes. "I will treasure it all my life! My son will preserve it as a relic.—My father has sought for you all through Paris, and he is anxiously in search, too, of his unknown benefactors. He will die of grief if you cannot help him to find them. He suffers from the darkest melancholy, and I cannot always succeed in rousing him from it."

Fascinated alike by the voice of this charming woman recalled from the grave, and by that of irresistible curiosity, Godefroid gave his arm to the hand held out by the Baronne de Mergi, who let her son go on in front with an errand, which the lad had understood from his mother's nod.

"I shall not take you far; we are living in the Allée d'Antin in a pretty little house *d l'Anglaise*; we have it all to ourselves, each of us occupies a floor. Oh, we are very comfortable! And my father believes that you have had a great deal to do with the good fortune that is poured upon us—"

"I?"

"Did you not know that a place has been created for him in consequence of a report from the Minister for Public Instruction, a Chair of Legislature, like one at the Sorbonne? My father will give his first course of lectures in the month of November next. The great work on which he was engaged will be published in a month or so; the house of Cavalier is bringing it out on half-profits with my father, and has paid him thirty thousand francs on account of his share; so he is buying the house we live in. The Minister



of Justice allows me a pension of twelve hundred francs as the daughter of a retired magistrate; my father has his pension of a thousand crowns, and he had five thousand francs with his professorship. We are so economical that we shall be almost rich.

"My Auguste will begin studying the law a few months hence; meanwhile, he has employment in the public prosecutor's office, and gets twelve hundred francs.—Oh, Monsieur Godefroid, never mention that miserable business of my poor Auguste's. For my part, I bless him every day for the deed which his grandfather has not yet forgiven. His mother blesses him, Halpersohn is devoted to him, but the old public prosecutor is implacable!"

"What business?" asked Godefroid.

"Ah! that is just like your generosity!" cried Vanda. "You have a noble heart. Your mother must be proud of you!—"

"On my word, I know nothing of the matter you allude to," said Godefroid.

"Really, you did not hear?" And she frankly told the story of Auguste's borrowing from the doctor, admiring her son for the action.

"But if I am to say nothing about this before the Baron," said Godefroid, "tell me how your son got out of the scrape."

"Well," said Vanda, "as I told you, my son is in the public prosecutor's office, and has met with the greatest kindness. He was not kept more than eight-and-forty hours in the Conciergerie, where he was lodged with the governor. The worthy doctor, who did not get Auguste's beautiful, sublime letter till the evening, withdrew the charge; and by the intervention of a former presiding judge of the Supreme Court—a man my father had never even seen—the public prosecutor had the police agent's report and the warrant for arrest both destroyed. In fact, not a trace of the affair survives but in my heart, in my son's conscience, and in his grandfather's mind—who, since that day, speaks to my boy in the coldest terms, and treats him as a stranger.

"Only yesterday, Halpersohn was interceding for him; but my father, who will not listen to me, much as he loves me, replied: 'You are the person robbed, you can and ought to forgive. But I am answerable for the thief—and when I sat on the Bench, I never pronounced a pardon!'—'You will kill your daughter,' said Halpersohn—I heard them. My father kept silence."

"But who is it that has helped you?"

"A gentleman who is, we believe, employed to distribute the benefactions of the Queen."

"What is he like?" asked Godefroid.

"He is a grave, thin man, sad-looking—something like my father. It was he who had my father conveyed to the house where we now are, when he was in a high fever. And, just fancy, as soon as my father was well, I was removed from the private hospital and brought there, where I found my old bedroom just as though I had never left it.—Halpersohn, whom the tall gentleman had quite bewitched—how I know not—then told me all about my father's sufferings, and how he had sold the diamonds off his snuffbox! My father and my boy often without bread, and making believe to be rich in my presence!—Oh, Monsieur Godefroid, those two men are martyrs! What can I say to my father? I can only repay him and my son by suffering for them, like them."

"And had the tall gentleman something of a military air?"

"Oh, you know him!" cried Vanda, as they reached the door of the house.

She seized Godefroid's hand with the grip of a woman in hysterics, and dragging him into a drawing-room of which the door stood open, she exclaimed—"Father, Monsieur Godefroid knows your benefactor."

Baron Bourlac, whom Godefroid found dressed in a style suitable to a retired judge of his high rank, held out his hand to Godefroid, and said—

"I thought as much."

Godefroid shook his head in negation of any knowledge of the details of this noble revenge; but the Baron did not give him time to speak.

"Monsieur," he went on, "only Providence can be more powerful, only Love can be more thoughtful, only Motherhood can be more clear-sighted, than your friends who are allied with those great divinities.—I bless the chance that has led to our meeting again, for Monsieur Joseph has vanished completely; and as he has succeeded in avoiding every snare I could lay to ascertain his real name and residence, I should have died in grief.—But here, read his letter.—And you know him?"

Godefroid read as follows:

"Monsieur le Baron Bourlaac, the money we have laid out for you by the orders of a charitable lady amounts to a sum of fifteen thousand francs. Take note of this, that it may be repaid either by you or by your descendants when your family is sufficiently prosperous to allow of it, for it belongs to the poor. When such repayment is possible, deposit the money you owe with the Brothers Mongenod, bankers. God forgive you your sins!"

The letter was mysteriously signed with five crosses.

Godefroid returned it.—"The five crosses, sure enough!" said he to himself.

"Now, since you know all," said the old man, "you who were this mysterious lady's messenger—tell me her name."

"Her name!" cried Godefroid; "her name! Unhappy man, never ask it! Never try to find it out.—Oh, Madame," said he, taking Madame de Mergi's hand in his own, which shook, "if you value your father's sanity, keep him in his ignorance; never let him make any attempt—"

The father, the daughter, and Auguste stood frozen with amazement.

"Well, then, the woman who has preserved your daughter for you," said Godefroid, looking at the old lawyer, "who



has restored her to you, young, lovely, fresh, and living—who has snatched her from the grave—who has rescued your grandson from disgrace—who has secured to you a happy and respected old age—who has saved you all three—” he paused, “is a woman whom you sent innocent to the hulks for twenty years,” he went on, addressing Monsieur Bourlac, “on whom, from your judgment-seat, you poured every insult, whose saintliness you mocked at, and from whom you snatched a lovely daughter to send her to the most horrible death, for she was guillotined!”

Godefroid, seeing Vanda drop senseless on to a chair, rushed out of the room, and from thence into the Allée d’Antin, where he took to his heels.

“If you would earn my forgiveness,” said Baron Bourlac to his grandson, “follow that man and find out where he lives.”

Auguste was off like a dart.

By half-past eight next morning, Baron Bourlac was knocking at the old yellow gate of the Hotel de la Chanterie, Rue Chanoinesse. He asked for Madame de la Chanterie, and the porter pointed to the stone steps. Happily they were all going to breakfast, and Godefroid recognized the Baron in the courtyard through one of the loopholes that lighted the stairs. He had but just time to fly down and into the drawing-room where they were all assembled, crying out—“Baron Bourlac.”

On hearing this name, Madame de la Chanterie, supported by the Abbé de Vèze, disappeared into her room.

“You shall not come in, you imp of Satan!” cried Manon, who recognized the lawyer, and placed herself in front of the drawing-room door. “Do you want to kill my mistress?”

“Come, Manon, let the gentleman pass,” said Monsieur Alain.

Manon dropped on to a chair as if her knees had both given way at once.

"Gentlemen," said the Baron in a voice of deep emotion, as he recognized Godefroid and Monsieur Joseph, and bowed to the two strangers, "Beneficence confers a claim on those benefited by it!"

"You owe nothing to us," said the worthy Alain; "you owe everything to God."

"You are saints, and you have the serenity of saints," replied the old lawyer. "You will hear me, I beg.—I have learned that the superhuman blessings that have been heaped on me for eighteen months past are the work of a person whom I deeply injured in the course of my duty; it was fifteen years before I was assured of her innocence; this, gentlemen, is the single remorse I have known as due to the exercise of my powers.—Listen! I have not much longer to live, but I shall lose that short term of life, necessary still to my children whom Madame de la Chanterie has saved, if I cannot win her forgiveness. Gentlemen, I will remain kneeling on the square of Notre-Dame till she has spoken one word!—I will wait for her there!—I will kiss the print of her feet; I will find tears to soften her heart—I who have been dried up like a straw by seeing my daughter's sufferings—"

The door of Madame de la Chanterie's room was opened, the Abbé de Vèze came through like a shade, and said to Monsieur Joseph—

"That voice is killing Madame."

"What! she is there! She has passed there!" cried Bourlac.

He fell on his knees, kissed the floor, and melted into tears, crying in a heart-rending tone—

"In the name of Jesus who died on the Cross, forgive! forgive! For my child has suffered a thousand deaths!"

The old man collapsed so entirely that the spectators believed he was dead.

At this moment Madame de la Chanterie appeared like a spectre in the doorway, leaning, half fainting, against the side-post.

"In the name of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette, whom I see on the scaffold, of Madame Elizabeth, of my daughter, and of yours—in the name of Jesus, I forgive you."

As he heard the words, the old man looked up and said—

"Thus are the angels avenged!"

Monsieur Joseph and Monsieur Nicolas helped him to his feet, and led him out to the courtyard; Godefroid went to call a coach; and when they heard the rattle of wheels, Monsieur Nicolas said as he helped the old man into it—

"Come no more, Monsieur, or you will kill the mother too. The power of God is infinite, but human nature has its limits."

That day Godefroid joined the Order of the Brethren of Consolation.

VINRZHOVNIA, UKRAINE, *December, 1847.*



## Z. MARCAS

*To His Highness Count William of Wurtemberg,  
as a token of the author's respectful gratitude*

DE BALZAC.

**I** NEVER SAW anybody, not even among the most remarkable men of the day, whose appearance was so striking as this man's; the study of his countenance at first gave me a feeling of great melancholy, and at last produced an almost painful impression.

There was a certain harmony between the man and his name. The Z. preceding Marcas, which was seen on the addresses of his letters, and which he never omitted from his signature, as the last letter of the alphabet, suggested some mysterious fatality.

MARCAS! say this two-syllabled name again and again; do you not feel as if it had some sinister meaning? Does it not seem to you that its owner must be doomed to martyrdom? Though foreign, savage, the name has a right to be handed down to posterity; it is well constructed, easily pronounced, and has the brevity that befits a famous name. Is it not pleasant as well as odd? But does it not sound unfinished?

I will not take it upon myself to assert that names have no influence on the destiny of men. There is a certain secret and inexplicable concord or a visible discord between the events of a man's life and his name which is truly surprising; often some remote but very real correlation is revealed. Our globe is round; everything is linked to everything else. Some day perhaps we shall revert to the occult sciences.

Do you not discern in that letter Z an adverse influence? Does it not prefigure the wayward and fantastic progress of a storm-tossed life? What wind blew on that letter, which, whatever language we find it in, begins scarcely fifty words? Marcas's name was Zephirin; Saint Zephirin is highly venerated in Brittany, and Marcas was a Breton.

Study the name once more: Z. Marcas! The man's whole life lies in this fantastic juxtaposition of seven letters; seven! the most significant of all the cabalistic numbers. And he died at five-and-thirty, so his life extended over seven lustres.

Marcas! Does it not hint of some precious object that is broken by a fall, with or without a crash?

I had finished studying the law in Paris in 1836. I lived at that time in the Rue Corneille in a house where none but students came to lodge, one of those large houses where there is a winding staircase quite at the back, lighted below from the street, higher up by borrowed lights, and at the top by a skylight. There were forty furnished rooms—furnished as students' rooms are! What does youth demand more than was here supplied? A bed, a few chairs, a chest of drawers, a looking-glass, and a table. As soon as the sky is blue the student opens his window.

But in this street there are no fair neighbors to flirt with. In front is the Odéon, long since closed, presenting a wall that is beginning to go black, its tiny gallery windows and its vast expanse of slate roof. I was not rich enough to have a good room; I was not even rich enough to have a room to myself. Juste and I shared a double-bedded room on the fifth floor.

On our side of the landing there were but two rooms—ours and a smaller one, occupied by Z. Marcas, our neighbor. For six months Juste and I remained in perfect ignorance of the fact. The old woman who managed the house had indeed told us that the room was inhabited, but she had added that we should not be disturbed, that the occupant

was exceedingly quiet. In fact, for those six months we never met our fellow-lodger, and we never heard a sound in his room, in spite of the thinness of the partition that divided us—one of those walls of lath and plaster which are common in Paris houses.

Our room, a little over seven feet high, was hung with a vile cheap paper sprigged with blue. The floor was painted, and knew nothing of the polish given by the *frotteur's* brush. By our beds there was only a scrap of thin carpet. The chimney opened immediately to the roof, and smoked so abominably that we were obliged to provide a stove at our own expense. Our beds were mere painted wooden cribs like those in schools; on the chimney-shelf there were but two brass candlesticks, with or without tallow candles in them, and our two pipes with some tobacco in a pouch or strewn abroad, also the little piles of cigar-ash left there by our visitors or ourselves.

A pair of calico curtains hung from the brass window rods, and on each side of the window was a small bookcase in cherry-wood, such as every one knows who has stared into the shop windows of the Quartier Latin, and in which we kept the few books necessary for our studies.

The ink in the inkstand was always in the state of lava congealed in the crater of a volcano. May not any inkstand nowadays become a Vesuvius? The pens, all twisted, served to clean the stems of our pipes; and, in opposition to all the laws of credit, paper was even scarcer than coin.

How can young men be expected to stay at home in such furnished lodgings? The students studied in the cafés, the theatre, the Luxembourg gardens, in grisettes' rooms, even in the law schools—anywhere rather than in their horrible rooms—horrible for purposes of study, delightful as soon as they are used for gossiping and smoking in. Put a cloth on the table, and the impromptu dinner sent in from the best eating-house in the neighborhood—places for four—two of them in petticoats—show a lithograph of this "Interior" to the veriest bigot, and she will be bound to smile.



We thought only of amusing ourselves. The reason for our dissipation lay in the most serious facts of the politics of the time. Juste and I could not see any room for us in the two professions our parents wished us to take up. There are a hundred doctors, a hundred lawyers, for one that is wanted. The crowd is choking these two paths which are supposed to lead to fortune, but which are merely two arenas; men kill each other there, fighting, not indeed with swords or firearms, but with intrigue and calumny, with tremendous toil, campaigns in the sphere of the intellect as murderous as those in Italy were to the soldiers of the Republic. In these days, when everything is an intellectual competition, a man must be able to sit forty-eight hours on end in his chair before a table, as a General could remain for two days on horseback and in his saddle.

The throng of aspirants has necessitated a division of the Faculty of Medicine into categories. There is the physician who writes and the physician who practices, the political physician, and the physician militant—four different ways of being a physician, four classes already filled up. As to the fifth class, that of physicians who sell remedies, there is such a competition that they fight each other with disgusting advertisements on the walls of Paris.

In all the law courts there are almost as many lawyers as there are cases. The pleader is thrown back on journalism, on politics, on literature. In fact, the State, besieged for the smallest appointments under the law, has ended by requiring that the applicants should have some little fortune. The pear-shaped head of the grocer's son is selected in preference to the square skull of a man of talent who has not a sou. Work as he will, with all his energy, a young man, starting from zero, may at the end of ten years find himself below the point he set out from. In these days, talent must have the good luck which secures success to the most incapable; nay, more, if it scorns the base compromises which insure advancement to crawling mediocrity, it will never get on.

If we thoroughly knew our time, we also knew ourselves, and we preferred the indolence of dreamers to aimless stir, easy-going pleasure to the useless toil which would have exhausted our courage and worn out the edge of our intelligence. We had analyzed social life while smoking, laughing, and loafing. But, though elaborated by such means as these, our reflections were none the less judicious and profound.

While we were fully conscious of the slavery to which youth is condemned, we were amazed at the brutal indifference of the authorities to everything connected with intellect, thought, and poetry. How often have Juste and I exchanged glances when reading the papers as we studied political events, or the debates in the Chamber, and discussed the proceedings of a Court whose wilful ignorance could find no parallel but in the platitude of the courtiers, the mediocrity of the men forming the hedge round the newly restored throne, all alike devoid of talent or breadth of view, of distinction or learning, of influence or dignity!

Could there be a higher tribute to the Court of Charles X. than the present Court, if Court it may be called? What a hatred of the country may be seen in the naturalization of vulgar foreigners, devoid of talent, who are enthroned in the Chamber of Peers! What a perversion of justice! What an insult to the distinguished youth, the ambitions native to the soil of France! We looked upon these things as upon a spectacle, and groaned over them, without taking upon ourselves to act.

Juste, whom no one ever sought, and who never sought any one, was, at five-and-twenty, a great politician, a man with a wonderful aptitude for apprehending the correlation between remote history and the facts of the present and of the future. In 1831, he told me exactly what would and did happen—the murders, the conspiracies, the ascendancy of the Jew, the difficulty of doing anything in France, the scarcity of talent in the higher circles, and the abundance of

intellect in the lowest ranks, where the finest courage is smothered under cigar ashes.

What was to become of him? His parents wished him to be a doctor. But if he were a doctor, must he not wait twenty years for a practice? You know what he did? No? Well, he is a doctor; but he left France, he is in Asia. At this moment he is perhaps sinking under fatigue in a desert, or dying of the lashes of a barbarous horde—or perhaps he is some Indian prince's prime minister.

Action is my vocation. Leaving a civil college at the age of twenty, the only way for me to enter the army was by enlisting as a common soldier; so, weary of the dismal outlook that lay before a lawyer, I acquired the knowledge needed for a sailor. I imitate Juste, and keep out of France, where men waste, in the struggle to make way, the energy needed for the noblest works. Follow my example, friends; I am going where a man steers his destiny as he pleases.

These great resolutions were formed in the little room in the lodging-house in the Rue Corneille, in spite of our haunting the Bal Musard, flirting with girls of the town, and leading a careless and apparently reckless life. Our plans and arguments long floated in the air.

Marcas, our neighbor, was in some degree the guide who led us to the margin of the precipice or the torrent, who made us sound it, and showed us beforehand what our fate would be if we let ourselves fall into it. It was he who put us on our guard against the time-bargains a man makes with poverty under the sanction of hope, by accepting precarious situations whence he fights the battle, carried along by the devious tide of Paris—that great harlot who takes you up or leaves you stranded, smiles or turns her back on you with equal readiness, wears out the strongest will in vexatious waiting, and makes misfortune wait on chance.

At our first meeting, Marcas, as it were, dazzled us. On our return from the schools, a little before the dinner-hour,



we were accustomed to go up to our room and remain there a while, either waiting for the other, to learn whether there were any change in our plans for the evening. One day, at four o'clock, Juste met Marcas on the stairs, and I saw him in the street. It was in the month of November, and Marcas had no cloak; he wore shoes with heavy soles, corduroy trousers, and a blue double-breasted coat buttoned to the throat, which gave a military air to his broad chest, all the more so because he wore a black stock. The costume was not in itself extraordinary, but it agreed well with the man's mien and countenance.

My first impression on seeing him was neither surprise, nor distress, nor interest, nor pity, but curiosity mingled with all these feelings. He walked slowly, with a step that betrayed deep melancholy, his head forward with a stoop, but not bent like that of a conscience-stricken man. That head, large and powerful, which might contain the treasures necessary for a man of the highest ambition, looked as if it were loaded with thought; it was weighted with grief of mind, but there was no touch of remorse in his expression. As to his face, it may be summed up in a word. A common superstition has it that every human countenance resembles some animal. The animal for Marcas was the lion. His hair was like a mane, his nose was short and flat, broad and dented at the tip like a lion's; his brow, like a lion's, was strongly marked with a deep median furrow, dividing two powerful bosses. His high, hairy cheekbones, all the more prominent because his cheeks were so thin, his enormous mouth and hollow jaws, were accentuated by lines of haughty significance, and marked by a complexion full of tawny shadows. This almost terrible countenance seemed illuminated by two lamps—two eyes, black indeed, but infinitely sweet, calm and deep, full of thought. If I may say so, those eyes had a humiliated expression.

Marcas was afraid of looking directly at others, not for himself, but for those on whom his fascinating gaze might rest; he had a power, and he shunned using it; he would

spare those he met, and he feared notice. This was not from modesty, but from resignation—not Christian resignation, which implies charity, but resignation founded on reason, which had demonstrated the immediate inutility of his gifts, the impossibility of entering and living in the sphere for which he was fitted. Those eyes could at times flash lightnings. From those lips a voice of thunder must surely proceed; it was a mouth like Mirabeau's.

"I have seen such a grand fellow in the street," said I to Juste on coming in.

"It must be our neighbor," replied Juste, who described, in fact, the man I had just met. "A man who lives like a wood-louse would be sure to look like that," he added.

"What dejection and what dignity!"

"One is the consequence of the other."

"What ruined hopes! What schemes and failures!"

"Seven leagues of ruins! Obelisks—palaces—towers!—The ruins of Palmyra in the desert!" said Juste, laughing. So we called him the Ruins of Palmyra.

As we went out to dine at the wretched eating-house in the Rue de la Harpe to which we subscribed, we asked the name of Number 37, and then heard the weird name Z. Marcas. Like boys, as we were, we repeated it more than a hundred times with all sorts of comments, absurd or melancholy, and the name lent itself to the jest. Juste would fire off the Z like a rocket rising, z-z-z-z-zed; and after pronouncing the first syllable of the name with great importance, depicted a fall by the dull brevity of the second.

"Now, how and where does the man live?"

From this query, to the innocent espionage of curiosity there was no pause but that required for carrying out our plan. Instead of loitering about the streets, we both came in, each armed with a novel. We read with our ears open. And in the perfect silence of our attic rooms, we heard the even, dull sound of a sleeping man breathing.

"He is asleep," said I to Juste, noticing this fact.

"At seven o'clock!" replied the Doctor.

This was the name by which I called Juste, and he called me the Keeper of the Seals.

"A man must be wretched indeed to sleep as much as our neighbor!" cried I, jumping on to the chest of drawers with a knife in my hand, to which a corkscrew was attached.

I made a round hole at the top of the partition, about as big as a five-sou piece. I had forgotten that there would be no light in the room, and on putting my eye to the hole, I saw only darkness. At about one in the morning, when we had finished our books and were about to undress, we heard a noise in our neighbor's room. He got up, struck a match, and lighted his dip. I got on to the drawers again, and I then saw Marcas seated at his table and copying law-papers.

His room was about half the size of ours; the bed stood in a recess by the door, for the passage ended there, and its breadth was added to his garret; but the ground on which the house was built was evidently irregular, for the party-wall formed an obtuse angle, and the room was not square. There was no fireplace, only a small earthenware stove, white blotched with green, of which the pipe went up through the roof. The window, in the skew side of the room, had shabby red curtains. The furniture consisted of an armchair, a table, a chair, and a wretched bed-table. A cupboard in the wall held his clothes. The wall-paper was horrible; evidently only a servant had ever lodged there before Marcas.

"What is to be seen?" asked the Doctor as I got down.

"Look for yourself," said I.

At nine next morning, Marcas was in bed. He had breakfasted off a saveloy; we saw on a plate, with some crumbs of bread, the remains of that too familiar delicacy. He was asleep; he did not wake till eleven. He then set to work again on the copy he had begun the night before, which was lying on the table.

On going downstairs we asked the price of that room, and were told fifteen francs a month.



In the course of a few days, we were fully informed as to the mode of life of Z. Marcas. He did copying, at so much a sheet no doubt, for a law-writer who lived in the courtyard of the Sainte-Chapelle. He worked half the night; after sleeping from six till ten, he began again and wrote till three. Then he went out to take the copy home before dinner, which he ate at Mizerai's in the Rue Michel-le-Comte, at a cost of nine sous, and came in to bed at six o'clock. It became known to us that Marcas did not utter fifteen sentences in a month; he never talked to anybody, nor said a word to himself in his dreadful garret.

"The Ruins of Palmyra are terribly silent!" said Juste. This taciturnity in a man whose appearance was so imposing was strangely significant. Sometimes when we met him, we exchanged glances full of meaning on both sides, but they never led to any advances. Insensibly this man became the object of our secret admiration, though we knew no reason for it. Did it lie in his secretly simple habits, his monastic regularity, his hermit-like frugality, his idiotically mechanical labor, allowing his mind to remain neuter or to work on its own lines, seeming to us to hint at an expectation of some stroke of good luck, or at some foregone conclusion as to his life?

After wandering for a long time among the Ruins of Palmyra, we forgot them—we were young! Then came the Carnival, the Paris Carnival, which, henceforth, will eclipse the old Carnival of Venice, unless some ill-advised Prefect of Police is antagonistic.

Gambling ought to be allowed during the Carnival; but the stupid moralists who have had gambling suppressed are inept financiers, and this indispensable evil will be re-established among us when it is proved that France leaves millions at the German tables.

This splendid Carnival brought us to utter penury, as it does every student. We got rid of every object of luxury; we sold our second coats, our second boots, our second waistcoats—everything of which we had a duplicate, except our

friend. We ate bread and cold sausages; we looked where we walked; we had set to work in earnest. We owed two months' rent, and were sure of having a bill from the porter for sixty or eighty items each, and amounting to forty or fifty francs. We made no noise, and did not laugh as we crossed the little hall at the bottom of the stairs; we commonly took it at a flying leap from the lowest step into the street. On the day when we first found ourselves bereft of tobacco for our pipes, it struck us that for some days we had been eating bread without any kind of butter.

Great was our distress.

"No tobacco!" said the Doctor.

"No cloak!" said the Keeper of the Seals.

"Ah, you rascals, you would dress as the postillon de Longjumeau, you would appear as Débardeurs, sup in the morning, and breakfast at night at Véry's—sometimes even at the Rocher de Cancale.—Dry bread for you, my boys! Why," said I, in a big bass voice, "you deserve to sleep under the bed, you are not worthy to lie in it—"

"Yes, yes; but, Keeper of Seals, there is no more tobacco!" said Juste.

"It is high time to write home, to our aunts, our mothers, and our sisters, to tell them we have no underlinen left, that the wear and tear of Paris would ruin garments of wire. Then we will solve an elegant chemical problem by transmuting linen into silver."

"But we must live till we get the answer."

"Well, I will go and bring out a loan among such of our friends as may still have some capital to invest."

"And how much will you find?"

"Say ten francs!" replied I with pride.

It was midnight. Marcas had heard everything. He knocked at our door.

"Messieurs," said he, "here is some tobacco; you can repay me on the first opportunity."

We were struck, not by the offer, which we accepted, but by the rich, deep, full voice in which it was made;

a tone only comparable to the lowest string of Paganini's violin. Marcas vanished without waiting for our thanks.

Juste and I looked at each other without a word. To be rescued by a man evidently poorer than ourselves! Juste sat down to write to every member of his family, and I went off to effect a loan. I brought in twenty francs loaned me by a fellow-provincial. In that evil but happy day gambling was still tolerated, and in its lodes, as hard as the rocky ore of Brazil, young men, by risking a small sum, had a chance of winning a few gold pieces. My friend, too, had some Turkish tobacco, brought home from Constantinople by a sailor, and he gave me quite as much as we had taken from Z. Marcas. I conveyed the splendid cargo into port, and we went in triumph to repay our neighbor with a tawny wig of Turkish tobacco for his dark *caporal*.

"You were determined not to be my debtors," said he. "You are giving me gold for copper.—You are boys—good boys—"

The sentences, spoken in varying tones, were variously emphasized. The words were nothing, but the expression! —That made us friends of ten years' standing at once.

Marcas, on hearing us coming, had covered up his papers; we understood that it would be taking a liberty to allude to his means of subsistence, and felt ashamed of having watched him. His cupboard stood open; in it there were two shirts, a white necktie, and a razor. The razor made me shudder. A looking-glass, worth five francs perhaps, hung near the window.

The man's few and simple movements had a sort of savage grandeur. The Doctor and I looked at each other, wondering what we could say in reply. Juste, seeing that I was speechless, asked Marcas jestingly—

"You cultivate literature, Monsieur?"

"Far from it!" replied Marcas. "I should not be so wealthy."

"I fancied," said I, "that poetry alone, in these days,



was amply sufficient to provide a man with lodgings as bad as ours."

My remark made Marcas smile, and the smile gave a charm to his yellow face.

"Ambition is not a less severe taskmaster to those who fail," said he. "You, who are beginning life, walk in the beaten paths. Never dream of rising superior, you will be ruined!"

"You advise us to stay just as we are?" said the Doctor, smiling.

There is something so infectious and childlike in the pleasantries of youth, that Marcas smiled again in reply.

"What incidents can have given you this detestable philosophy?" asked I.

"I forgot once more that chance is the result of an immense equation of which we know not all the factors. When we start from zero to work up to the unit, the chances are incalculable. To ambitious men Paris is an immense roulette table, and every young man fancies he can hit on a successful progression of numbers."

He offered us the tobacco I had brought that we might smoke with him; the Doctor went to fetch our pipes; Marcas filled his, and then he came to sit in our room, bringing the tobacco with him, since there were but two chairs in his. Juste, as brisk as a squirrel, ran out, and returned with a boy carrying three bottles of Bordeaux, some Brie cheese, and a loaf.

"Hah!" said I to myself, "fifteen francs," and I was right to a sou.

Juste gravely laid five francs on the chimney-shelf.

There are immeasurable differences between the gregarious man and the man who lives closest to nature. Toussaint Louverture, after he was caught, died without speaking a word. Napoleon, transplanted to a rock, talked like a magpie—he wanted to account for himself. Z. Marcas erred in the same way, but for our benefit only. Silence in all its majesty is to be found only in the savage. There never

is a criminal who, though he might let his secrets fall with his head into the basket of sawdust, does not feel the purely social impulse to tell them to somebody.

Nay, I am wrong. We have seen one Iroquois of the Faubourg Saint-Marceau who raised the Parisian to the level of the natural savage—a Republican, a Conspirator, a Frenchman, an old man, who outdid all we have heard of Negro determination, and all that Cooper tells us of the tenacity and coolness of the Redskins under defeat. Morey, the Guatimozin of the "Mountain," preserved an attitude unparalleled in the annals of European justice.

This is what Marcas told us during the small hours, sandwiching his discourse with slices of bread spread with cheese and washed down with wine. All the tobacco was burned out. Now and then the hackney coaches clattering across the Place de l'Odéon, or the omnibuses toiling past, sent up their dull rumbling, as if to remind us that Paris was still close to us.

His family lived at Vitré; his father and mother had fifteen hundred francs a year in the Funds. He had received an education gratis in a Seminary, but had refused to enter the priesthood. He felt in himself the fires of immense ambition, and had come to Paris on foot at the age of twenty, the possessor of two hundred francs. He had studied the law, working in an attorney's office, where he had risen to be senior clerk. He had taken his doctor's degree in law, had mastered the old and modern codes, and could hold his own with the most famous pleaders. He had studied the law of nations, and was familiar with European treaties and international practice. He had studied men and things in five capitals—London, Berlin, Vienna, St. Petersburg, and Constantinople.

No man was better informed than he as to the rules of the Chamber. For five years he had been reporter of the debates for a daily paper. He spoke extempore and admirably, and could go on for a long time in that deep, appealing

voice which had struck us to the soul. Indeed, he proved by the narrative of his life that he was a great orator, a concise orator, serious and yet full of piercing eloquence; he resembled Berryer in his fervor and in the impetus which commands the sympathy of the masses, and was like Thiers in refinement and skill; but he would have been less diffuse, less in difficulties for a conclusion. He had intended to rise rapidly to power without burdening himself first with the doctrines necessary to begin with, for a man in opposition, but an incubus later to the statesman.

Marcas had learned everything that a real statesman should know; indeed, his amazement was considerable when he had occasion to discern the utter ignorance of men who have risen to the administration of public affairs in France. Though in him it was vocation that had led to study, nature had been generous and bestowed all that cannot be acquired—keen perceptions, self-command, a nimble wit, rapid judgment, decisiveness, and, what is the genius of these men, fertility in resource.

By the time when Marcas thought himself duly equipped, France was torn by intestine divisions arising from the triumph of the House of Orleans over the elder branch of the Bourbons.

The field of political warfare is evidently changed. Civil war henceforth cannot last for long, and will not be fought out in the provinces. In France such struggles will be of brief duration and at the seat of government; and the battle will be the close of the moral contest which will have been brought to an issue by superior minds. This state of things will continue so long as France has her present singular form of government, which has no analogy with that of any other country; for there is no more resemblance between the English and the French constitutions than between the two lands.

Thus Marcas's place was in the political press. Being poor and unable to secure his election, he hoped to make a sudden appearance. He resolved on making the greatest



possible sacrifice for a man of superior intellect, to work as subordinate to some rich and ambitious deputy. Like a second Bonaparte, he sought his Barras; the new Colbert hoped to find a Mazarin. He did immense services, and he did them then and there; he assumed no importance, he made no boast, he did not complain of ingratitude. He did them in the hope that his patron would put him in a position to be elected deputy; Marcas wished for nothing but a loan that might enable him to purchase a house in Paris, the qualification required by law. Richard III. asked for nothing but his horse.

In three years Marcas had made his man—one of the fifty supposed great statesmen who are the battledores with which two cunning players toss the ministerial portfolios, exactly as the man behind the puppet-show hits Punch against the constable in his street theatre, and counts on always getting paid. This man existed only by Marcas, but he had just brains enough to appreciate the value of his “ghost” and to know that Marcas, if he ever came to the front, would remain there, would be indispensable, while he himself would be translated to the polar zone of the Luxembourg. So he determined to put insurmountable obstacles in the way of his Mentor’s advancement, and hid his purpose under the semblance of the utmost sincerity. Like all mean men, he could dissimulate to perfection, and he soon made progress in the ways of ingratitude, for he felt that he must kill Marcas, not to be killed by him. These two men, apparently so united, hated each other as soon as one had once deceived the other.

The politician was made one of a ministry; Marcas remained in the opposition to hinder his man from being attacked; nay, by skilful tactics he won him the applause of the opposition. To excuse himself for not rewarding his subaltern, the chief pointed out the impossibility of finding a place suddenly for a man on the other side, without a great deal of manœuvring. Marcas had hoped confidently for a place to enable him to marry, and thus acquire the qualifica-

tion he so ardently desired. He was two-and-thirty, and the Chamber ere long must be dissolved. Having detected his man in this flagrant act of bad faith, he overthrew him, or at any rate contributed largely to his overthrow, and covered him with mud.

A fallen minister, if he is to rise again to power, must show that he is to be feared; this man, intoxicated by Royal glibness, had fancied that his position would be permanent; he acknowledged his delinquencies; besides confessing them, he did Marcas a small money service, for Marcas had got into debt. He subsidized the newspaper on which Marcas worked, and made him the manager of it.

Though he despised the man, Marcas, who, practically, was being subsidized too, consented to take the part of the fallen minister. Without unmasking at once all the batteries of his superior intellect, Marcas came a little further than before; he showed half his shrewdness. The Ministry lasted only a hundred and eighty days; it was swallowed up. Marcas had put himself into communication with certain deputies, had molded them like dough, leaving each impressed with a high opinion of his talent; his puppet again became a member of the Ministry, and then the paper was ministerial. The Ministry united the paper with another, solely to squeeze out Marcas, who in this fusion had to make way for a rich and insolent rival, whose name was well known, and who already had his foot in the stirrup.

Marcas relapsed into utter destitution; his haughty patron well knew the depths into which he had cast him.

Where was he to go? The ministerial papers, privily warned, would have nothing to say to him. The opposition papers did not care to admit him to their offices. Marcas could side neither with the Republicans nor with the Legitimists, two parties whose triumph would mean the overthrow of everything that now is.

"Ambitious men like a fast hold on things," said he with a smile.

He lived by writing a few articles on commercial affairs,

and contributed to one of those encyclopedias brought out by speculation and not by learning. Finally a paper was founded, which was destined to live but two years, but which secured his services. From that moment he renewed his connection with the minister's enemies; he joined the party who were working for the fall of the Government; and as soon as his pickaxe had free play, it fell.

This paper had now for six months ceased to exist; he had failed to find employment of any kind; he was spoken of as a dangerous man, calumny attacked him; he had unmasked a huge financial and mercantile job by a few articles and a pamphlet. He was known to be the mouthpiece of a banker who was said to have paid him largely, and from whom he was supposed to expect some patronage in return for his championship. Marcas, disgusted by men and things, worn out by five years of fighting, regarded as a free lance rather than as a great leader, crushed by the necessity for earning his daily bread, which hindered him from gaining ground, in despair at the influence exerted by money over mind, and given over to dire poverty, buried himself in a garret, to make thirty sous a day, the sum strictly answering to his needs. Meditation had levelled a desert all round him. He read the papers to be informed of what was going on. Pozzo di Borgo had once lived like this for some time.

Marcas, no doubt, was planning a serious attack, accustoming himself to dissimulation, and punishing himself for his blunders by Pythagorean muteness. But he did not tell us the reasons for his conduct.

It is impossible to give you an idea of the scenes of the highest comedy that lay behind this algebraic statement of his career; his useless patience dogging the footsteps of Fortune, which presently took wings, his long tramps over the thorny brakes of Paris, his breathless chases as a petitioner, his attempts to win over fools; the schemes laid only to fail through the influence of some frivolous woman; the meetings with men of business who expected their capital to bring them places and a peerage, as well as large interest.



Then the hopes rising in a towering wave only to break in foam on the shoal; the wonders wrought in reconciling adverse interests which, after working together for a week, fell asunder; the annoyance, a thousand times repeated, of seeing a dunce decorated with the Legion of Honor, and preferred, though as ignorant as a shop-boy, to a man of talent. Then, what Marcas called the stratagems of stupidity—you strike a man, and he seems convinced, he nods his head—everything is settled; next day, this India-rubber ball, flattened for a moment, has recovered itself in the course of the night; it is as full of wind as ever; you must begin all over again; and you go on till you understand that you are not dealing with a man, but with a lump of gum that loses shape in the sunshine.

These thousand annoyances, this vast waste of human energy on barren spots, the difficulty of achieving any good, the incredible facility of doing mischief; two strong games played out, twice won and then twice lost; the hatred of a statesman—a blockhead with a painted face and a wig, but in whom the world believed—all these things, great and small, had not crushed, but for the moment had dashed, Marcas. In the days when money had come into his hands, his fingers had not clutched it; he had allowed himself the exquisite pleasure of sending it all to his family—to his sisters, his brothers, his old father. Like Napoleon in his fall, he asked for no more than thirty sous a day, and any man of energy can earn thirty sous for a day's work in Paris.

When Marcas had finished the story of his life, intermingled with reflections, maxims, and observations, revealing him as a great politician, a few questions and answers on both sides as to the progress of affairs in France and in Europe were enough to prove to us that he was a real statesman; for a man may be quickly and easily judged when he can be brought on to the ground of immediate difficulties: there is a certain Shibboleth for men of superior talents, and we were of the tribe of modern Levites without belonging as

yet to the Temple. As I have said, our frivolity covered certain purposes which Juste has carried out, and which I am about to execute.

When we had done talking, we all three went out, cold as it was, to walk in the Luxembourg gardens till the dinner-hour. In the course of that walk our conversation, grave throughout, turned on the painful aspects of the political situation. Each of us contributed his remarks, his comment, or his jest, a pleasantry or a proverb. This was no longer exclusively a discussion of life on the colossal scale just described by Marcas, the soldier of political warfare. Nor was it the distressful monologue of the wrecked navigator, stranded in a garret in the Hotel Corneille; it was a dialogue in which two well-informed young men, having gauged the times they lived in, were endeavoring, under the guidance of a man of talent, to gain some light on their own future prospects.

"Why," asked Juste, "did you not wait patiently for an opportunity, and imitate the only man who has been able to keep the lead since the Revolution of July by holding his head above water?"

"Have I not said that we never know where the roots of chance lie? Carrel was in identically the same position as the orator you speak of. That gloomy young man, of a bitter spirit, had a whole government in his head; the man of whom you speak had no idea beyond mounting on the crupper of every event. Of the two, Carrel was the better man. Well, one became a minister, Carrel remained a journalist; the incomplete but craftier man is living; Carrel is dead.

"I may point out that your man has for fifteen years been making his way, and is but making it still. He may yet be caught and crushed between two cars full of intrigues on the highroad to power. He has no house; he has not the favor of the Palace like Metternich; nor, like Villèle, the protection of a compact majority.

"I do not believe that the present state of things will

last ten years longer. Hence, supposing I should have such poor good luck, I am already too late to avoid being swept away by the commotion I foresee. I should need to be established in a superior position."

"What commotion?" asked Juste.

"AUGUST, 1830," said Marcas in solemn tones, holding out his hand toward Paris; "AUGUST, the offspring of Youth which bound the sheaves, and of Intellect which had ripened the harvest, forgot to provide for Youth and Intellect.

"Youth will explode like the boiler of a steam-engine. Youth has no outlet in France; it is gathering an avalanche of underrated capabilities, of legitimate and restless ambitions; young men are not marrying now; families cannot tell what to do with their children. What will the thunder-clap be that will shake down these masses? I know not, but they will crash down into the midst of things, and overthrow everything. These are laws of hydrostatics which act on the human race; the Roman Empire had failed to understand them, and the Barbaric hordes came down.

"The Barbaric hordes now are the intelligent class. The laws of overpressure are at this moment acting slowly and silently in our midst. The Government is the great criminal; it does not appreciate the two powers to which it owes everything; it has allowed its hands to be tied by the absurdities of the Contract; it is bound, ready to be the victim.

"Louis XIV., Napoleon, England, all were or are eager for intelligent youth. In France the young are condemned by the new legislation, by the blundering principles of elective rights, by the unsoundness of the ministerial constitution.

"Look at the elective Chamber; you will find no deputies of thirty; the youth of Richelieu and of Mazarin, of Turenne and of Colbert, of Pitt and of Saint-Just, of Napoleon and of Prince Metternich, would find no admission there; Burke, Sheridan, or Fox could not win seats. Even if political majority had been fixed at one-and-twenty, and



eligibility had been relieved of every disabling qualification, the Departments would have returned the very same members, men devoid of political talent, unable to speak without murdering French grammar, and among whom, in ten years, scarcely one statesman has been found.

"The causes of an impending event may be seen, but the event itself cannot be foretold. At this moment the youth of France is being driven into Republicanism, because it believes that the Republic would bring it emancipation. It will always remember the young representatives of the people and the young army leaders! The imprudence of the Government is only comparable to its avarice."

That day left its echoes in our lives. Marcas confirmed us in our resolution to leave France, where young men of talent and energy are crushed under the weight of successful commonplace, envious, and insatiable middle age.

We dined together in the Rue de la Harpe. We thenceforth felt for Marcas the most respectful affection; he gave us the most practical aid in the sphere of the mind. That man knew everything; he had studied everything. For us he cast his eye over the whole civilized world, seeking the country where openings would be at once the most abundant and the most favorable to the success of our plans. He indicated what should be the goal of our studies; he bid us make haste, explaining to us that time was precious, that emigration would presently begin, and that its effect would be to deprive France of the cream of its powers and of its youthful talent; that their intelligence, necessarily sharpened, would select the best places, and that the great thing was to be first in the field.

Thenceforward, we often sat late at work under the lamp. Our generous instructor wrote some notes for our guidance—two pages for Juste and three for me—full of invaluable advice—the sort of information which experience alone can supply, such landmarks as only genius can place. In those papers, smelling of tobacco, and covered with writing so vile as to be almost hieroglyphic, there are sug-

gestions for a fortune, and forecasts of unerring acumen. There are hints as to certain parts of America and Asia which have been fully justified, both before and since Juste and I could set out.

Marcas, like us, was in the most abject poverty. He earned, indeed, his daily bread, but he had neither linen, clothes, nor shoes. He did not make himself out any better than he was; his dreams had been of luxury as well as of power. He did not admit that this was the real Marcas; he abandoned his person, indeed, to the caprices of life. What he lived by was the breath of ambition; he dreamed of revenge while blaming himself for yielding to so shallow a feeling. The true statesman ought, above all things, to be superior to vulgar passions; like the man of science, he should have no passion but for his science. It was in these days of dire necessity that Marcas seemed to us so great—nay, so terrible; there was something awful in the gaze which saw another world than that which strikes the eyes of ordinary men. To us he was a subject of contemplation and astonishment; for the young—which of us has not known it?—the young have a keen craving to admire; they love to attach themselves, and are naturally inclined to submit to the men they feel to be superior, as they are to devote themselves to a great cause.

Our surprise was chiefly aroused by his indifference in matters of sentiment; woman had no place in his life. When we spoke of this matter, a perennial theme of conversation among Frenchmen, he simply remarked—

“Gowns cost too much.”

He saw the look that passed between Juste and me, and went on—

“Yes, far too much. The woman you buy—and she is the least expensive—takes a great deal of money. The woman who gives herself takes all your time! Woman extinguishes every energy, every ambition. Napoleon reduced her to what she should be. From that point of view, he really was great. He did not indulge such ruinous fan-

cies as Louis XIV. and Louis XV.; at the same time, he could love in secret."

We discovered that, like Pitt, who made England his wife, Marcas bore France in his heart; he idolized his country; he had not a thought that was not for his native land. His fury at feeling that he had in his hands the remedy for the evils which so deeply saddened him, and could not apply it, ate into his soul, and this rage was increased by the inferiority of France at that time, as compared with Russia and England. France a third-rate power! This cry came up again and again in his conversation. The intestinal disorders of his country had entered into his soul. All the contests between the Court and the Chamber, showing, as they did, incessant change and constant vacillation, which must injure the prosperity of the country, he scoffed at as backstairs squabbles.

"This is peace at the cost of the future," said he.

One evening Juste and I were at work, sitting in perfect silence. Marcas had just risen to toil at his copying, for he had refused our assistance in spite of our most earnest entreaties. We had offered to take it in turns to copy a batch of manuscript, so that he should do but a third of his distasteful task; he had been quite angry, and we had ceased to insist.

We heard the sound of gentlemanly boots in the passage, and raised our heads, looking at each other. There was a tap at Marcas's door—he never took the key out of the lock—and we heard our hero answer—

"Come in." Then—"What! you here, Monsieur!"

"I myself," replied the retired minister.

It was the Diocletian of this unknown martyr.

For some time he and our neighbor conversed in an undertone. Suddenly Marcas, whose voice had been heard but rarely, as is natural in a dialogue in which the applicant begins by setting forth the situation, broke out loudly in reply to some offer we had not overheard.



"You would laugh at me for a fool," cried he, "if I took you at your word. Jesuits are a thing of the past, but Jesuitism is eternal. Your Machiavelism and your generosity are equally hollow and untrustworthy. You can make your own calculations, but who can calculate on you? Your Court is made up of owls who fear the light, of old men who quake in the presence of the young, or who simply disregard them. The Government is formed on the same pattern as the Court. You have hunted up the remains of the Empire, as the Restoration enlisted the Voltigeurs of Louis XIV.

"Hitherto the evasions of cowardice have been taken for the manœuvring of ability; but dangers will come, and the younger generation will rise as they did in 1790. They did grand things then.—Just now you change ministries as a sick man turns in his bed; these oscillations betray the weakness of the Government. You work on an underhand system of policy which will be turned against you, for France will be tired of your shuffling. France will not tell you that she is tired of you; a man never knows whence his ruin comes; it is the historian's task to find out; but you will undoubtedly perish as the reward of not having asked the youth of France to lend you its strength and energy; for having hated really capable men; for not having lovingly chosen them from this noble generation; for having in all cases preferred mediocrity.

"You have come to ask my support, but you are an atom in that decrepit heap which is made hideous by self-interest, which trembles and squirms, and, because it is so mean, tries to make France mean too. My strong nature, my ideas, would work like poison in you; twice you have tricked me, twice have I overthrown you. If we unite a third time, it must be a very serious matter. I should kill myself if I allowed myself to be duped; for I should be to blame, not you."

Then we heard the humblest entreaties, the most fervent abjurations, not to deprive the country of such superior

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talents. The man spoke of patriotism, and Marcas uttered a significant "*Ouh! ouh!*" He laughed at his would-be patron. Then the statesman was more explicit; he bowed to the superiority of his erewhile counsellor; he pledged himself to enable Marcas to remain in office, to be elected deputy; then he offered him a high appointment, promising him that he, the speaker, would thenceforth be the subordinate of a man whose subaltern he was only worthy to be. He was in the newly-formed ministry, and he would not return to power unless Marcas had a post in proportion to his merit; he had already made it a condition, Marcas had been regarded as indispensable.

Marcas refused.

"I have never before been in a position to keep my promises; here is an opportunity of proving myself faithful to my word, and you fail me!"

To this Marcas made no reply. The boots were again audible in the passage on the way to the stairs.

"Marcas, Marcas!" we both cried, rushing into his room. "Why refuse? He really meant it. His offers are very handsome; at any rate, go to see the ministers."

In a twinkling, we had given Marcas a hundred reasons. The minister's voice was sincere; without seeing him, we had felt sure that he was honest.

"I have no clothes," replied Marcas.

"Rely on us," said Juste, with a glance at me.

Marcas had the courage to trust us; a light flashed in his eye, he pushed his fingers through his hair, lifting it from his forehead with a gesture that showed some confidence in his luck; and when he had thus unveiled his face, so to speak, we saw in him a man absolutely unknown to us—Marcas sublime, Marcas in his power! His mind in its element—the bird restored to the free air, the fish to the water, the horse galloping across the plain.

It was transient. His brow clouded again; he had, it would seem, a vision of his fate. Halting doubt had followed close on the heels of white-winged hope.

We left him to himself.

"Now, then," said I to the Doctor, "we have given our word; how are we to keep it?"

"We will sleep upon it," said Juste, "and to-morrow morning we will talk it over."

Next morning we went for a walk in the Luxembourg.

We had had time to think over the incident of the past night, and were both equally surprised at the lack of address shown by Marcas in the minor difficulties of life—he, a man who never saw any difficulties in the solution of the hardest problems of abstract or practical politics. But these elevated characters can all be tripped up on a grain of sand, and will, like the grandest enterprise, miss fire for want of a thousand francs. It is the old story of Napoleon, who, for lack of a pair of boots, did not set out for India.

"Well, what have you hit upon?" asked Juste.

"I have thought of a way to get him a complete outfit."

"Where?"

"From Humann."

"How?"

"Humann, my boy, never goes to his customers—his customers go to him; so that he does not know whether I am rich or poor. He only knows that I dress well and look decent in the clothes he makes for me. I shall tell him that an uncle of mine has dropped in from the country, and that his indifference in matters of dress is quite a discredit to me in the upper circles where I am trying to find a wife.—It will not be Humann if he sends in his bill before three months."

The Doctor thought this a capital idea for a vaudeville, but poor enough in real life, and doubted my success. But I give you my word of honor, Humann dressed Marcas, and, being an artist, turned him out as a political personage ought to be dressed.

Juste loaned Marcas two hundred francs in gold, the product of two watches bought on credit, and pawned at the Mont-de-Piété. For my part, I had said nothing of six



shirts and all necessary linen, which cost me no more than the pleasure of asking for them from a forewoman in a shop whom I had treated to Musard's during the carnival.

Marcas accepted everything, thanking us no more than he ought. He only inquired as to the means by which we had got possession of such riches, and we made him laugh for the last time. We looked on our Marcas as shipowners, when they have exhausted their credit and every resource at their command to fit out a vessel, must look on it as it puts to sea.

Here Charles was silent; he seemed crushed by his memories.

"Well," cried the audience, "and what happened?"

"I will tell you in few words—for this is not romance—it is history.

"We saw no more of Marcas. The administration lasted for three months; it fell at the end of the session. Then Marcas came back to us, worked to death. He had sounded the crater of power; he came away from it with the beginnings of brain fever. The disease made rapid progress; we nursed him. Juste at once called in the chief physician of the hospital where he was working as house-surgeon. I was then living alone in our room, and I was the most attentive attendant; but care and science alike were in vain. By the month of January, 1838, Marcas himself felt that he had but a few days to live.

"The man whose soul and brain he had been for six months never even sent to inquire after him. Marcas expressed the greatest contempt for the Government; he seemed to doubt what the fate of France might be, and it was this doubt that had made him ill. He had, he thought, detected treason in the heart of power, not tangible, seizable treason, the result of facts, but the treason of a system, the subordination of national interests to selfish ends. His belief in the degradation of the country was enough to aggravate his complaint.

"I myself was witness to the proposals made to him by one

of the leaders of the antagonistic party which he had fought against. His hatred of the men he had tried to serve was so virulent that he would gladly have joined the coalition that was about to be formed among certain ambitious spirits who, at least, had one idea in common—that of shaking off the yoke of the Court. But Marcas could only reply to the envoy in the words of the Hôtel de Ville—

“‘It is too late!’

“Marcas did not leave money enough to pay for his funeral. Juste and I had great difficulty in saving him from the ignominy of a pauper's bier, and we alone followed the coffin of Z. Marcas, which was dropped into the common grave of the cemetery of Mont-Parnasse.”

We looked sadly at each other as we listened to this tale, the last we heard from the lips of Charles Roubourdin the day before he embarked at le Havre on a brig that was to convey him to the islands of Malay. We all knew more than one Marcas, more than one victim of his devotion to a party, repaid by betrayal or neglect.

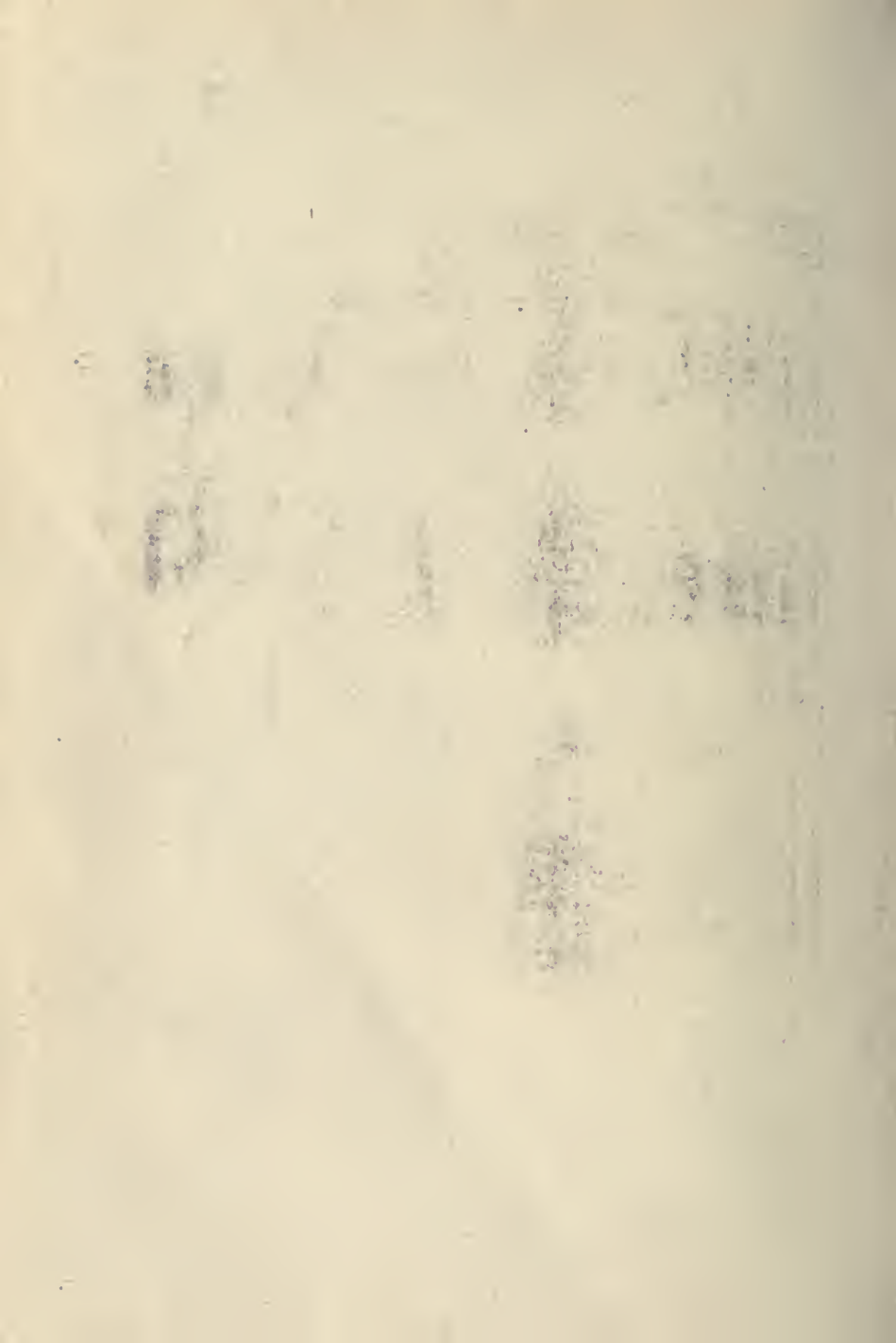
LES JARDIES, *May, 1840.*













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